

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 11

The IDF had practiced until they could fly the mission in their sleep; still, the word didn't come from on high. Apparently, no one had put forth a compelling enough reason to attack Iran and risk the anger of Russia. The relationship between Russia and Iran was frequently strained because Russia had a clear track record of being against Muslims. Afghanistan was one example; the Beslan School Hostage situation was an opposite example.

On this particular day, Iran must have been irritated with China and Russia; they launched an IRBM that struck in the West Bank. It may well have been a test flight; it had neither an explosive warhead nor a nuclear warhead. The Israelis got their act together and launched 30 aircraft, 18 F-16s and 12 F-15s to provide air cover. They used a deep penetrating variation of the JDAM and they wiped out Iran's nuclear program just as they had Iraq's. Iran responded by launching all three of their nuclear tipped missiles and an unknown number of conventionally tipped missiles.

Israel responded in kind with Jericho III missiles, not armed conventionally. Israel had the Jericho III since 2005 and it was rumored to be capable of carrying a single nuclear warhead. Which is rubbish because Israel isn't a nuclear power; or wasn't officially until they launched those missiles. Putin wasn't President of Russia anymore, but he was Foreign Minister. Russia launched against Israel. Israel isn't that large of a county and the three Iranian warheads had done considerable damage. The single missile Russia launched with 6 MIRVs finished off what Iran had missed.

The US went from DEFCON 5 to DEFCON 2 in a heartbeat. The only clue some of us had was that Homeland Security went immediately to RED. Next, came a leak to MSM and Fox News announced that the military was at DEFCON 2. They went on to say that politicians were being evacuated from the District of Columbia, etc. I called a friend and asked. He told me Threatcon Delta, DEFCON 2.

"Jimbo, you'd better get your butt up here."

"Why?"

"We just went to Threatcon Delta, DEFCON 2. Israel bombed Iran, Iran nuked Israel, Israel nuked Iran and Russia nuked Israel. Load your horses and put your guns and ammo in with your tack. I've got to call my sister Jill."

"What are the wives doing?"

"Canning; and they're just taking another batch off the stove."

"It will take at least an hour."

“Take your time, I’d bet you have an hour or more. Everyone is going to think twice before they start a GTW.”

I suppose they did think twice, no one is around who knows. What I can tell you is that eventually, Russia launched at us, just as they’d promised. We retaliated against both Russia and China who came aboard, late. Russia launched against the US and China and the EU. About the only countries spared were African countries or countries they couldn’t reach. One way or another, the US has the ability to reach out and touch everyone. The Minuteman ICBM always had the theory that the missiles are at T-minus 2 minutes and holding. The Trident system and the Polaris system have been designed with a different philosophy. They’re at sea and can be up and running in a matter of a few hours. But they don’t try to keep them on alert all the time like the Minuteman.

Any attack launched by the US that included both Minuteman missiles and D-5 missiles would, of necessity, come in waves. Kind of like, if the left one doesn’t get you, the right one will. I know, I know, it took long enough to get here. Given a choice, I’d have preferred not to be here. Karen and I have one bedroom, Jimbo and Susan the second leaving 12 beds for our four kids, Jim and my sister and her family. Got lucky, we had two empty beds, both in the girl’s dorm.

Jill assumed that the second bedroom was for her and David, getting us started off on the wrong foot. I told both of them to be thankful they had a place to duck their heads. I further set them off because I was openly carrying my P-14.

“Why do you need to wear that?”

“So I know where it is when I need it?”

“Can’t you at least wait until we’re out of here?”

“No.”

“But...”

“Whatever you’re going to say next, I don’t want to hear. You have a 10/22, did you bring it?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“We sold it.”

I was wrong; they didn’t have any ammunition because they didn’t have any firearms. They didn’t need to look to us to bail them out. She knew what she thought I had, not what we actually had. I wasn’t about to enlighten her. Jimbo had arrived and his guns

were in the gun closet long before Jill and David arrived. He was wearing a Colt SAA with a 7½” barrel, Susan a SAA with the 5½” barrel and Jim the 7½”. Karen was wearing her Miami Classic.

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“I think that’s the peak level. We’ll have to wait an hour to be sure and then I can input it in the spreadsheet.”

“What is it?”

“265.”

“How long?”

“I’ll let Jill go when the radiation level reaches 104mR/hr. We’ll stay in until the radiation is at or below 50mR/hr.”

“She really pissed you off didn’t she?”

“I would have expected her to put up the gun, not sell it off; especially after I made a special trip to Des Moines to get a replacement.”

“She’s going to insist we give her food. What can we say; they’re your nieces and nephew?”

“We can give them food and tell her that if she doesn’t return the jars, there won’t be any more.”

“She’s your sister Will.”

“Was my sister. She made it plain that she wanted no part of you, me or the farm.”

“That’s cold.”

“Then you deal with her Karen, I won’t. You’ll see soon enough that I’m right and if you don’t, I’ll apologize to you.”

“You won’t owe me an apology; you will owe one to Jill.”

“I might, but it will be a cold day in hell before...”

“Don’t say anything you might regret.”

That was when I decided to open up the armory and clean my guns, including both Tac-50s. David may have wet his pants and the look Jill gave me was a Kodiak moment. I

kept going, cleaning the Super Matches the Loadeds, Standards, the shotguns, the kids' guns and even my SAS firearms. Jill had all but turned purple, but she never said a word. Is there a word that conveys livid times 100? I didn't think so.

Then, I went through the process of loading the magazines from the supply of ammo I kept in the shelter, loading 5 magazines of Mk211MP and 5 magazines of A-MAX for each of the fifty caliber rifles, 20 magazines of 175gr BTHP and 5 magazines of 180gr Nosler AccuBond for each Super Match. The bullets clicked in place and Jill jerked with every click. How had she gone from an average farm girl who loved to shoot with dad and me to being an *I don't know what to call her*? It was the accident, I'm sure.

We didn't use the radios for the first two weeks after the attack. When Jimbo and I thought it was safe, we connected the portable NOAA radio to the long dipole wire antenna to see what we could pull in. Initially, it was just static, but that began to clear and finally we picked up a Des Moines radio station, WHO. They obviously weren't putting out their full 50kw, but it was enough to get a signal. The majority of the broadcast was devoted to local Des Moines news and one hour, at noon each day, to statewide and national news. We started to keep a list of the cities that had been attacked and how many weapons were used when the information was available. The body counts they gave must have been estimates either from the state or the feds. We noted them but didn't take them too seriously.

"For every person that dies in the initial attack, I'd expect double that with radiation sickness and probably triple that considering cancer."

"You may be a little high Will."

"According to most estimates, the immediate effects of the blast of the bombing of Hiroshima killed approximately 70,000 people. Estimates of total deaths by the end of 1945 from burns, radiation and related disease, the effects of which were aggravated by lack of medical resources, range from 90,000 to 140,000. Some estimates state up to 200,000 had died by 1950, due to cancer and other long-term effects. From 1950 to 1990, roughly 9% of the cancer and leukemia deaths among bomb survivors were due to radiation from the bombs."

"What was the population before the bombing?"

"At the time of the attack, about 255,000."

"What about Nagasaki?"

"I don't have the figures. The Japanese were spared on that drop because the bomb was 2 miles off target. The Hiroshima bomb was 13kT and the Nagasaki bomb around 21kT."

"How do you know this stuff?"

“Blame your daughter, she got me interested in history and I studied it from a military point of view. We were building 7 more of the Nagasaki type bombs and would have been able to drop them on Japan over the course of about another two months. The United States expected to have another atomic bomb ready for use in the third week of August, with three more in September and a further three in October.”

“Did they complete those bombs?”

“I think so. They were our first nuclear stockpile. Fat Man was given the designation Mk 3 and we built the one we used on Nagasaki, one experimental model and 120 production models with a yield in the range of 18kT up to 49kT for the last 40.”

“So we were ready to go from the beginning?”

“Not really. The Mark 3 could be in combat ready status for just a short time. The life span of its lead acid batteries, once charged and installed was only nine days, during which time they had to be recharged twice (the batteries retained their charge for three days at a time). After nine days, the entire bomb had to be disassembled to remove the chemical batteries, lest they begin to corrode. Another problem was core heating: the large amount of plutonium in the weapon radiated so much energy (from alpha decay) that the pit had to be removed after ten days or its thermal effects would damage the high explosive charges and detonators. Like battery change, pit replacement also required complete disassembly and reassembly of the bomb, a procedure that took forty to fifty men between 56 and 76 hours to complete.”

“You didn’t get that from Wiki.”

“Global Security, it’s no longer relevant and of great historical interest.”

“What color of blood runs in your veins, you’re a dyed in the wool, genuine, dedicate survivalist.”

“Red, the same as yours. A survivalist proposes the overthrow of the government if circumstance warrant; I don’t. Thus, I’m more properly called a prepper.”

“Your sister sure has a bone to pick with you.”

“Her problem, not mine; I can’t figure out what her problem is either. I bought her some firearms and she took one which they sold off. As far as I’m concerned that was the last straw. I’m booting them out the minute the radiation is be below 104mR/hr.”

“Just like that?”

“We’ll probably give them some food, but yes, just like that.”

“Remind me not to get you pissed off at me.”

“You know what it could be? She promised to keep an eye on dad. She may have known he was having dizzy spells and feels guilty she didn’t drive and they ended up in that accident.”

“Maybe, people sometimes run from things when they feel guilt.”

“If that’s the case, it wasn’t her fault; you had to have known my dad.”

“Stubborn?”

“Like a mule.”

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“Did you try to talk dad out of driving to pick me up?”

“He wouldn’t listen, Will. I tried to be ready to grab the steering wheel if necessary but he cranked it hard over and there was nothing I could do.”

“And you feel guilty because you didn’t insist.”

“More than you’ll ever know.”

“And, it’s partly my fault because the two of you were coming up to Camp Dodge to pick me up.”

“To a lesser extent yes.”

“So for almost 6 years, we’ve been enemies or something like that?”

“I’ve changed.”

“I noticed.”

“Take the gun thing, for example. Having guns in a home in the city isn’t like having guns in a home on a farm. David is terrified of firearms and he nagged me for years before I sold it.”

“When did you sell it?”

“About a month before the attacks.”

“Any chance you could tell the buyer you changed your mind?”

“Possible, but not likely, he really wanted the gun. He was worried his wife would find out and there would be hell to pay. Besides, we spent the money.”

“Money isn’t an issue, believe me. When we get out of the shelter, are you willing to go talk to him about buying back the gun? I’ll pay for it.”

“But you had gotten me that M1A.”

“I have 6 extra and while they aren’t the fancy Super Match, they’re very good rifles.”

“I don’t know; David would have a fit.”

“How would David feel if a bad guy tried to assault his family?”

“He’d probably just try and talk them out of it. If he failed, he’d probably claim that it could have been worse.”

“Yeah, like *well, he could have killed you after he raped you?*”

“That sounds like David.”

“There a name for people like him in the circles I run around in these days. We call the sheeple. Personally, I classify him as a POS.”

“A what?”

“You’ll figure it out.”

“What’s with the ammo?”

“I got the 7.62 NATO surplus for 19 cents a round and it’s now worth 50 cents a round or more. I bought Black Hills Match grade ammo for the Super Match rifles. I have two kinds of ammo for the fifty caliber rifles and three kinds of shotgun ammo, buckshot, slug and flechettes. The ammo for the kids rifles in US surplus on 10-round stripper clips. I have an assortment for the old fashioned single action revolvers. Altogether, there are over 100,000 rounds of ammo.

“What’s in the crates?”

“M72s.”

“And the other boxes?”

“M61, M67, concussion and smoke.”

“Where’s your howitzer?”

“Back pasture? Actually the fifty calibers and LAWs are our largest weapons. You really should get back into practice.”

When the radiation level was down to about 100mR/hr, Jill and I took off, much to everyone’s surprise to see if we could repurchase the weapon. She pointed out the house and I went up and knocked on the door without getting an answer.

“Nobody seems to be home Jill.”

“That’s strange he claimed he had an improvised shelter in the basement.”

“Do you think I should go in and announce myself? It could be they didn’t hear me knock.”

“Let’s both go, he knows me.”

It was apparent from the odor that assailed us when we entered that something was very wrong. I told her to wait in the living room and I’d check out the basement shelter. The shelter proved to be of exceedingly poor construction and lacked an air filtration system of sufficient quality. The guy had an air pipe sucking air from the outside that had two simple furnace filters. They’d poisoned themselves without realizing it.

“Here is your gun back.”

“How much did it cost you, I’ll pay you back.”

“I got a bargain, it was free.”

“What did you find in the basement?”

“The bodies of three people who died of exposure to radiation. Homemade air filters may work provided they’re properly constructed, his weren’t.”

“Did you get the magazines for the 10/22?”

“They were in a box with a small quantity of ammo. I’ll give you ammo when we get home and let me know if your husband gives you any crap, I believe that I’d enjoy setting him straight.”

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Let me back up and fill in the middle. We were all in the shelter by the time the missiles hit. As noted, the fallout, probably from Lincoln, peaked at 265R/hr. The first night, Karen stayed up late, working on a batch of bread. While it was in the bowl rising, she came to bed, but set the alarm. Around oh dark thirty, the alarm went off and she got up

to punch down the bread and knead it. She formed two loaves of French bread, 4 loaves of 1 pound loaves and a pan of cinnamon rolls. She came back to bed, set the alarm and went back to sleep.

When the alarm went off for the second time, she heated the oven and baked the bread. When the bread was done, she put in the cinnamon rolls. When she pulled those out, the smell woke me up. We had a quiet conversation discussing, among other things, the attack and Jill. She thawed a large can of orange juice and everyone woke to a continental breakfast of coffee, cinnamon rolls and orange juice.

That was an example of how it went for the first 25 or so days. Jill and David were barely civil, but they held their tongues. The kids, on the other hand, didn't have any idea about the problems between Jill and me. Eventually I had that conversation with Jimbo and after much thought, decided to give it one last chance, mainly to clear my conscience. I intended to throw them out when the radiation level reached 104mR/hr.

Things didn't work out that way, I'm happy to say. Jill and I returned to the shelter, washed the contamination from our suits and entered the shelter. David took one look at the gun and started to say something. However, he thought better of it. I looked through the gun closet and tagged a M1A to give to Jill when they left.

I took a duffel bag and added a universal cleaning kit, bore snakes, Breakfree and a silicon gun rag. I set it aside with 25 empty magazines and all but forgot about it. Jill apologized to Karen, profusely. The tone of her voice indicated that her apology was genuine. David remained barely civil. I figured he'd probably come along or get booted out the door with the clothes on his back.

On more than one occasion, Jill and David met in the girl's dorm and we could hear them arguing through the door. Nothing was said when they emerged, but Jill had a half smirk on her face. This went on until David came to me and asked if I could teach him to shoot an M1A, a .45 caliber pistol and a shotgun. Although I would, gladly, I made him stew a day while I thought it over. When he looked as if he'd lost his best friend I told him I'd do it. I only attached one condition, he take a spare M1A, shotgun and used .45 so he could protect his family.

Karen and Jill did discuss food and Karen was more than generous, starting them off with a 3 month supply. She showed Jill how to bake bread, make several quick and easy meals using the supplies we were providing, etc.

I told David I'd loan him the small generator for their fridge and/or freezer plus several cans of stabilized fuel. Jill and I recovered her firearm somewhere in the middle of all that. I suggested they stay until the radiation reached a maximum of 100mR/hr.

"What are we going to do for employment? How are we going to pay the bills, buy food and gas?"

“How about we find a mobile home and move it out here?”

“One of those cramped little trailer homes?”

“No, a 16'x74' single wide; or perhaps a double wide if we can find one and figure out how to assemble it.”

“I'm going down to check on our livestock, Will; can you back me up?”

“Want me to bring my shotgun or my rifle?”

“Yes.”

Thinking I wouldn't be sniping, I took one of the 6 Standard model M1As, filled the 25 magazines with SA surplus and a shotgun bandoleer with an assortment of shells. Half of Jimbo's herd was dead and the other half was mostly staying in the barn except when they went to the pasture to eat. His old windmill kept the stock tank full. However, for whatever reason, the fallout level was higher here and we didn't stay long. We returned to our farm, got the horse trailer and started moving Jimbo's livestock. When we had the 20 surviving cattle moved, we moved the surviving 12 sows. All of the chickens were dead except for two, a hen and a rooster.

“Do you suppose we can move back next year?”

“You could move back now, but the radiation is a bit high and I can't explain that. I also checked the reading in Bethany and they're even higher. I discussed a singlewide or possible a doublewide for David and Jill. You can either stay in the house or we could look for a second mobile home.”

“What did you have in mind Will?”

The dealer in Bethany has two display models, a Beacon Hill with floor plan D and Lifestages floor plan A. It wouldn't take much to plumb them and we could either get separate generators or PV panels and batteries plus controllers.”

“How would we go about it?”

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 12

“Well, first off, we’d decide where to set them and install sewage and water lines and then grade the spots level. We could find a semi-tractor and pull the halves up here and set them in place. We’d have to find the equipment they use to pull the homes together and assemble them. I’d run the houses East-West so you have a roof with a southern exposure.”

“Know anything about assembling mobile homes?”

“Line up the holes and insert bolts? No, but the four of us should be able to figure it out. We’ll have to find stands and skirting and that’s about all I know.”

“Is your septic system large enough?”

“It should be able to handle the output from several homes. The way the water is plumbed, water won’t be a problem either. The well fills the tank over the shelter and a water pump does the rest. About the only thing I don’t have is propane.”

“We could steal a pair of tanks and two propane delivery trucks. That should do us for a while. There’s a terminal near Des Moines so when we’ve used up the local supply of propane, we could go there.”

“Well, propane would be the best choice because it contains about 7-8 times the energy of LNG.”

It was, as always, easier said than done. Nevertheless, we had spots ready for the new homes in about 3 weeks. We only found one semi-tractor that we could get running and made four trips to haul the homes from Bethany to the farm. The house for David and Jill was the smaller of the two and we did it first, for practice. Next, we assembled the Beacon Hill for Jimbo, Susan and Jim. We returned to the dealer and collected heat tape and pipe insulation. After we had the plumbing protected against cold weather, we found and installed the skirting and added a row of bales of oat straw two bales high.

We found and installed 1,000-gallon (net) propane tanks and filled them. Next, we located a pair of RS30000 propane fueled generators that could put out 240v at 125 amps of prime power. They were wired to the circuit breaker box, omitting the ATS entirely. Finally we moved furniture from both homes to stock the mobile homes.

It was very cold when I took David out to learn to shoot. We had disassembled and assembled the M1A until he could almost do it with his eyes closed. We started by breaking in the barrel, ten shots and the bore snake between every shot. We were using the surplus, but the rifle and ammo were accurate, perhaps 1-1.5MOA. Jill shot too because she hadn’t fired a rifle since dad died. She revived her shooting skills quickly but was nowhere near as good as Karen. We had seven adults comprising our entire defense force in the beginning. Later, Jack Smith and his wife joined us.

“Do you have access to any more mobile homes?”

“There were only two in Bethany.”

“There are all kinds in Des Moines, would it be okay if the wife and I stayed here and put together another doublewide?”

“No problem; however, we’ll need another semi-tractor to tow the second half and we’ll need to haul a generator and propane tank down here. What’s the status on Costco?”

“Looted, along with most of the grocery stores. How large of a generator?”

“We used two RS30000s. We have propane on hand to fill the tank after it’s installed. We use coal to heat the house.”

“The other lady about your age; your sister?”

“We reconciled. Does your wife shoot?”

“As well as I do and we both have Super Match rifles, P-14 pistols and Mossberg shotguns. Actually I have extra shotguns. When they didn’t sell, I took them home and put them up for a rainy day. Our ammo supply includes Black Hills and SA surplus for the rifles, 00 and slugs for the shotguns, Lawman and Gold Dot for the pistols.”

“I bought another Tac-50 from the store you used to own.”

“I put half of the money from the sale into gold and silver Eagles.”

“I’ve mapped out possible defensive positions along the north side of 100th street. We can start to work on them after we get you a home. What will it take two trips or three?”

“One to get the home, a second for furnishings and a third to get a generator and propane tank. We won’t have to look far for a generator; I already have one, a Cummins/Onan RS45000. It’s a heavy sucker, around 2,750 pounds. I’m not sure how we can load it.”

Jack found one he liked, a Fleetwood Beacon Hills, floor plan D. While David and Jim extended the sewer and water lines, Jack, Jimbo and I went to Des Moines. We loaded the generator first into the back of the pickup (we took the top off before we left) and a 1,100 gallon (gross) propane tank in the trailer. We hooked the semi to one half of the home and the second half to a tractor we found and got running. We went by Jack’s house and loaded the furniture through a slit we cut in the paper of one of the halves. We cut the number of trips from three to one.

The David and Jim were still grading when we returned so we left the halves sit until the following day. It took us two days of hard labor to bolt the halves together and another day to attach the trim and connect the water and sewer. We sat the large generator in place just before supper, but left connecting it to the next day. We did get heat tapes installed and the pipes insulated. We use a long extension cord to power them temporarily. The next day, we installed the tank, connected it to the house and generator and fired up the generator. The final step was to rearrange the furniture which didn't take long at all.

We boxed up quite a bit of food for the Smith's and he paid for it in gold. His wife Sally and he divided the activity room into two sections, one for her hobbies and the other half for his. He promptly installed 4-gun rifle racks and filled three of them. The ground was frozen so hard, we couldn't dig the fighting holes and we resorted to filling sand bags and building them. There was a two-person position every 200 yards for a mile.

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It didn't warm up enough to plant anything and we only got one cutting from the alfalfa. Fortunately, Jimbo had enough corn, oats and soybeans stored to get us through the winter. While it was unseasonably cold, we had experienced worse winters. I don't remember when, but Jimbo claimed we did. We couldn't plant a garden either, but we didn't need to, we could use up some of the home canned food and we did have three freezers nearly full of meat.

Jill suggested that we go to the Hy-Vee store in Bethany and get one of their three meat saws so we could cut and wrap meat when it came time to slaughter. She'd leave a note explaining to the meat department manager that we had the saw and would return it when requested to do so. We also got their grinder, slicer, tenderizer and a few knives. Our biggest prize was the knife sharpener. We also took all the butcher paper we could find.

Because of the attacks, we didn't have elections last fall. The radio brought news of the deaths in Washington; it appeared that we might be able start back up with a clean slate, if and when they held elections. John McCain announced from his Sedona home that he wasn't interested. He was probably too old anyway, having turned 76 this year. The country would probably do better without leadership than it did when it had it.

The pecking order was the federal government followed by the state government followed by the local government. The federal government seemed to think that the 10th Amendment didn't apply to them; anyway, that's the way they had acted for a very long time. Karen said there were mixed opinions about when it started, but by the time of the Civil War, it was securely entrenched. Iowa had fought in the Civil War and had furnished 48 infantries the 1st through the 48th Infantry Regiments plus one Regiment of African Americans. That war was a bad war from any viewpoint, brothers fighting brothers, etc. Just across the street was the Confederacy, literally.

This time, however, we were united in a common cause, surviving in a PAW. We didn't need to salvage for quite some time, but decided to do so anyway, if we didn't get the salvage, someone else would and we intended to share what we could with others. When the weather permitted, we could grow a substantial amount of food and it wouldn't be hard to split up the oat field into oats and wheat. Forty acres of wheat was more than we could use. One could get the maximum yield by planting wheat in rows 7½" apart with 8 plants per foot of row. Theoretically, 64 bushels per acre or 2,560 bushels total. It took roughly 2¼ bushels of wheat to produce 100 pounds of flour. Therefore we could, again theoretically, produce approximately 113,778 pounds of flour from a 40 acre field. That was a whole lot of biscuits.

"Big town, small town, in between town?"

"I say we hit a big city. There are so many more resources available, Jim what do you think?"

"Medium or larger, Will."

"David?"

"I'm opposed to looting, just on principle, and calling it salvage doesn't change it into something that it isn't."

"We wouldn't want you to violate your principles, feel free to stay here."

"Thank you."

"Jack?"

"Our best bet would be Des Moines and work our way down."

"I'll top off the pickup, hook up the trailer and we can take off, give me 30 minutes."

"What are you taking for guns?"

"I'm taking the Tac-50, my Super Match and my Mossberg and three pistols."

"Three? I thought all you had was the .45 and the .380."

"We picked up Browning's."

"God Bless John Moses Browning."

"You can add Garand to the list. We'd better take a few cans of gasoline and diesel fuel. Want to hit grocery warehouses?"

“Nah, Hy-Vee only has two, one in Chariton and one in Cherokee.”

“But Chariton is closer than Des Moines, go to Osceola and turn west.”

“It would be nice if we could find a semi-tractor trailer rig. We don’t have much storage space left.”

There were several trucks pulled up to Hy-Vee’s loading docks and the way bill indicated the cargos. Using their forklift, we removed some things and added others. The trucks had full tanks so we wouldn’t need the cans of fuel we’d brought. We selected bathroom tissue, feminine hygiene supplies, unrefrigerated canned hams, pasta, sauces, boxed meals like Hamburger helper and about a truck load of canned goods. We were able to break into the pharmacy storage and selected drugs I recognized plus all of the bandages they had in stock.

When we finished we went back in and walked the aisles looking for anything we’d missed. They were well organized with about 1 million ft². We did find some things we missed, soft drinks, bottled water, tea bags, plus all of the flour, sugar, shortening and vegetable oil they had. Did I mention the hams? We clean them out of the shelf stable hams and canned tamales, one of my favorites, made by Hormel. We added a couple of cartloads of spices and decided to leave and try to get back home by dark.

“Four truck loads? Will it all keep?”

“It’s all shelf-stable and should be good for at least a couple of years. We’ll sort through the trailers tomorrow and deliver one truckload to the Hy-Vee in Bethany.”

After dinner, we were sitting around sipping some whiskey and discussing the day’s events.

“We made out like bandits in Chariton.”

“We should be able to fill the shelves in the Hy-Vee in Bethany.”

“Plus we did it without a shot being fired. I’ve been wondering something since the nukes. Does anyone think the anthrax attack had any connection to the war?”

“I suppose that would depend on whether you believe it was a terrorist attack or a state sponsored event. Although Karen has a point, it’s a reach to assume that they’d bother with an anthrax attack if they were planning on a war.”

“You’re forgetting how that war got started. Iran attacked, Israeli bombed, Iran responded with nukes and then Israel replied with nukes. Russia attacked Israel and we backed them up. Russia then launched a strike at the EU, China and the US. China retaliated against the US and Russia.”

“But what if they weren’t expecting Iran to make that missile test?”

“That might explain it, provided Russia was the sponsor. It doesn’t matter; the GTW did a lot more damage than the anthrax. There isn’t always an answer for every question, fellas.”

“You’re the fanatical survivalist, where do we go from here?”

“We help where we can, we salvage whatever is available and we keep the home front secure. We plant gardens and crops when the weather permits and we expand our live-stock operation to its limits. I have two years’ worth of hybrid seed and two years’ worth of non-hybrid plus fertilizer for 3-4 years. Combine that with the manure and we should be okay.”

“When can my family and I return to our farm?”

“Anytime you choose Jimbo. With David to help, I can let Jim go if you need him. If David can’t help, Jill can like she did growing up. I should have built a greenhouse, but I didn’t believe a war would cause weather this cold.”

“Does that qualify as an oops?”

“I have rolls of plastic, all I need is framing.”

“Will one trip to the lumberyard be enough?”

“Should be.”

“I’ll talk to Marty if I can find him. Dirt floor, treated lumber for the bottom?”

“Should work. We can double up the plastic.”

“How big?”

“I don’t know, maybe 32’x48’.”

“I think he has 32’ trusses.”

“That would make it go faster. We’d need 25 of those and enough 2x4s to frame it. Maybe a single or double door.”

“I’ll have to see what he has in stock. How are we going to pay him?”

“We have food, cash and if necessary, a small stock of gold and silver.”

“Want to ride along?”

“When are you going?”

“First thing in the morning. We can leave Jack, Jim and David to start sorting out the contents of the trucks. The women may want a few of those things for our use.”

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“You ready?”

“Let’s go.”

Jimbo and I chit chatted about nothing really until we got to Bethany. The interstate was blocked north and south of the off ramps.

“What’s up? Why the road block?”

“Who are you mister and what do you want?”

“My name is Jim Ross and I live here. Who might you be?”

“Never you mind who I am, what do you want?”

“It that a radio?”

“Yessir.”

“Call in and tell them Jim Ross is at the road block and wants in.”

“He can’t be more than 18 or 19; they shouldn’t have a kid on a road block.”

“Not with an M16, they shouldn’t.”

“Okay, you can go directly to the Sheriff’s office.”

“George.”

“Jim. What brings you to town?”

“A couple of things. The kid you have on the roadblock didn’t know me. Why aren’t you putting experienced Deputies on the road blocks?”

“We’re a bit short handed. He called in didn’t he?”

“He did. Look, you know Will, right? Married Karen.”

“Oh that’s right; don’t see much of you Iowa boys. What can I do for the two of you?”

“It’s more like what we can do for each other, George. We need a load of lumber to build a greenhouse. We have a load of food from the Hy-Vee warehouse in Chariton. If we can get a greenhouse up, we can supply fresh food too.”

“You out on the farm?”

“We stayed in Will’s shelter up on his farm.”

“You don’t say. Real bomb shelter?”

“Pretty much. So, how about I go see Marty about the lumber and the Hy-Vee manager about what food he needs.”

“Marty didn’t make it, Jim. I’ve seen the Hy-Vee guy around, but not for a couple of days.”

“What about the lumber?”

“You won’t need a lot, right?”

“Some 2x4s and some trusses plus a couple of doors.”

“You can load it up and take it. We’ll work something out to offset it by the value of the food you bring in.”

We got the name from the sticker on the door at the store. I didn’t know this new manager. We looked him up in a phone book and went to his home.

“I’m Jim Ross and this is Will Sherman. Will’s sister Jill works for you.”

“What can I do for you fellas?”

“Give us a list of food you need to restock your shelves.”

“You have food?”

“Oh yeah. Just to make it look good, we’ll even deliver it in a Hy-Vee truck.”

“We’ll have to go to the store and get the inventory list. Then I’ll have to do a quick inventory and that could take 2-3 hours.”

“We’ll meet you at the store in 3 hours then. You might want to double up on some of the fast moving items.”

“Now what?”

“We go to the lumberyard, load up and take it to your farm. We dump the load and bring the truck back. That should give him enough time to get the inventory done.”

Jimbo did a fast count on the 2x4s and took a little extra. We loaded the trusses and two pre-hung doors on the truck. Marty had sold lighting so we picked up all the 4' double bulb fluorescent fixtures he had in stock plus warm and cool white bulbs. We drove the load up to the farm and used the loader to unload it. Then, we returned the truck to the lumberyard, got my pickup and went to Hy-Vee.

“Did you get the list made up?”

“I just finished. You took some of the equipment from our meat department.”

“Only what we needed.”

“I'll have it back now.”

“Okay, we'll go after it.”

“Don't you want the grocery list?”

“I won't need it.”

“Why not?”

“I'm going to be too busy looking for a replacement meat saw and related equipment to have time to deliver you any food.”

“You're bluffing.”

“No, I'm going home to get your meat saw. See you in about an hour. If you're not here, I'll just unload it in front of the store.”

Jimbo looked at me, but didn't say anything. I headed for the pickup.

“Wait.”

“Yes?”

“Keep the meat saw. Here's the list.”

“You were bluffing, weren't you?” Jimbo asked on the way home.

“I had a pair of Aces in the hole. Make it four Aces. Their records only show where Jill and David live. I’d have taken the equipment back and let them wait a good long while before we delivered any food. The Sheriff knows where I live, but he’d be out of his jurisdiction. We’d have given the same food as before but with just in time inventories, I doubt they could have waited long.”

“That’s cold.”

“Karen accused me of the same thing concerning Jill. Jimbo I have to put the interest of my family and the interests of our small group ahead of any feelings I may have in the matter. It’s like that thing Karen occasionally reminds me of, remembering history.”

“How long will it take to put together their order?”

“We’ll just have to see how Jack, Jim and David are doing.”

Jack, Jim and David had managed to empty two trailers and were well into a third. They sat the goods on some of the plastic I had stored. I gave them the list to load on trailer and Jimbo and I shot two steers and four hogs. We skinned them and let them hang to cool off. When they were cool enough, I used a saw to split the carcasses in half.

“That’s going to have to do; I’m not sure where you break them down from here.”

“We’ll have to take it in tomorrow. It’s too late to do it today.”

It was eleven the next morning before we had the goods sorted and loaded. We added the animal carcasses last and headed for Bethany. When we arrived at the roadblock, we told the Deputy to call the Sheriff and ask him to get the store manager and meet us at Hy-Vee.

“It took longer than I thought. The last things we loaded were 4 sides of beef and 8 sides of pork. We’ll just leave the truck here and you can unload it as you see fit. The meat was freshly killed yesterday, so you may want to age it yourselves.”

“We can buy live animals and butcher them ourselves, provided you have some to sell.”

“We’ll see.”

“Well, I believe we may have a few. The Sheriff knows where I live and can send someone up when you want some. Keep in mind, it won’t be a lot by your usual standards, I only raise around 30-40 head of beef a year and around 600 hogs.”

“The meat isn’t tainted by radiation is it?”

“My livestock had their own bomb shelter.”

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 13

“I almost believe that,” George chuckled.

“See for yourself, Sheriff.”

“You didn’t mention the livestock I raise.”

“I can’t speak for you Jimbo. You culled your herds and will have to build them back up.”

“It won’t take long to build the hogs back up and about half of the calves born should be heifers. All the more reason for us to move back to my farm. We’ll stay to help with the greenhouse and then we’re gone.”

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The construction didn’t take long and we started by moving the livestock. Next, we moved a good store of food and finally, they left. Jill and David moved from the house they were using to the larger mobile home that Jimbo and Susan had used.

We emptied a propane tank and hauled it down south, installed it and refilled it. We also took one of the generators down so they had power. We had to replace the generator, so we made a trip back to Des Moines. The tank was the easy part, the generator took longer and we ended up with an RS20000. The home was, at the moment, a spare; however, I’d lost my hired hand and wasn’t sure David would make much of a farmer.

Jack, David and I finished sorting the trailer contents and redistributing the loads after taking anything we could use. Jack was on board concerning security, but David said he probably couldn’t shoot someone.

“You’ll get over that about three seconds after they shoot at you. If you don’t, you’ll most likely end up dead. You need to practice until you can shoot the eye out of a butterfly at 100-yards and aiming and shooting become second nature.”

“You’re freak of nature Will. Nobody should have that level of skills except a soldier.”

“What do you think I learned in boot camp? They don’t really teach that in boot camp and you learn the first time someone takes a shot at you. If you’ve honed your instincts, you react and walk away intact. I saw a lot of guy’s puke the first time it happened to them. Would you rather puke your guts up or die?”

“But this is America, those thing don’t happen here.”

“This is PAW America and they will happen. Probably to a lesser extend in this area, but they will happen. You work with Jill until defending yourself and your family becomes second nature.”

We sold the remaining barrows a few at a time and did the same with the steers. We bred 44 sows/gilts and 40 cows/heifers. We also bred the mares as there seemed to be a market for both draft horses and saddle horses. A dairy in Bethany asked for our milk and was willing to pay for it in gold and silver.

“If nothing else, you’re going to die rich.”

“Very rich, I hope, I’m not ready to die anytime soon. We’re down to the final trailer load of food for Bethany; I wonder what they will do after that?”

“I’d imagine they buy all the vegetables we can grow, most if not all of the meat and wheat, if you get a crop in next year.”

“They’ll probably buy any excess hay, corn and beans too. How about Maid Rites for supper, it’s been a while.”

“Ok, I’ll form some of the bread into buns.”

“Make extra and we can freeze them, I might want breaded pork tenderloins soon, too. Thaw two packages and I’ll invite Jack and Sally over.”

“I’ll have to make some fries from scratch.”

“You peel and I’ll push.”

We had acquired a wall mounted French fry cutter with two sizes of blades, $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{3}{8}$ ". I could cut up 20 pound of fries in just a few minutes. They fell into a stainless steel pail, were washed and dried then pre-cooked. I’d first seen a wall mounted cutter in a restaurant across from the ISU campus. Run by a Greek family, if I recall correctly; can’t remember the name, Campus Café?

“We’ll just do enough for tonight Will, they’re better because we have no way to sharp freeze them.”

“I’ll go ask Jack and Sally and cut them when I get back.”

“Jack would Sally and you like to come over for Maid Rites and fries tonight?”

“Genuine Maid Rites?”

“Bought the meat from the restaurants in Des Moines.”

“Sally?”

“Sounds good to me.”

“Come over anytime, we working on it. The meat will take about an hour to be ready.”

o

“Care for a drink?”

“What do you have?”

“Homemade whiskey, several years old. Bottled it at around 6 years.”

“I could do with a taste, what do you have for mix?”

You name it, we probably have it.”

“Squirt?”

“Got that.”

“What about you Sally?”

“The same.”

“Karen, we’re having drinks. What can I get you?”

“Myers and Coke?”

The Maid Rite was steaming, the French fries pre-cooked and everything was ready as soon as the meat was done. We had time to sit down and enjoy a drink or two and visit. Jack had sold his share of guns in the day, but I was his largest customer. He suggested that the ammo was a good investment because it was a military caliber and aside from military sources could become scare. He thought maybe I could get \$100 a battle pack, that’s what he’d ask. He thought the GTW would make all the difference. It was still cheaper than some of the ammo available 4 years before. While Jack no longer had the quantity of ammo we had, he had enough he could sell some, if need be.

We had three kids sitting on booster chairs and the fourth in the high chair. To make life easier, Karen feed them first and put on a Disney movie. Jillian wasn’t a bit happy about that, due to her age no doubt.

Are you wondering what’s become of Uncle John and Jack? They went together and built their own shelter. They’re around and working John’s farm. When I last checked, their operation was larger than ours by at least 50%. They already had a greenhouse and had raised food the first summer after the attack and again after that crop was harvested. They were selling their production in Lamoni and Osceola. Food tastes must run

in the family, they had a freezer dedicated to nothing but Maid Rite meat and tenderloins.

They were prepared as much as a family could be security wise. I wouldn't have selected AR15s, 870s or Ruger GP100 revolvers for myself, but different strokes for different folks, I suppose. Fortunately they had magazine extensions for the shotguns and speed loaders for the revolvers. There's nothing wrong with the .357 magnum cartridge and they had 158gr Gold Dot ammo. I can't imagine what they were thinking of when they bought the Bushmaster A3s, 20" A3 Chrome Lined Barrel Target Rifles in pre-ban configuration. Jack (Smith) laughed and said they had insisted on the rifles and even had him get bayonets.

They quit making real bayonets sometime during WW II. I could have put national match flashhiders on the rifles with bayonet lugs, or had Jack do it, but the bayonet was a stubby little thing, not worth the effort. When I mentioned it to him, he asked if I wanted to do all 8 rifles or just the 6 Standard models. I told him you didn't need a bayonet on a sniper rifle and he came out with 6 flashhiders and 6 M1942 bayonets with the 16" blades. He said the M1905 bayonets had wood handles and these were brown plastic grips, parkerized and poorly finished. They were manufactured by Wilde Drop Forge and Tool Company, Kansas City, MO (WT). The best part was he installed the new flashhiders and gave me the bayonets for no charge.

"No charge?"

"That's what he said."

"Did you get them for the Super Match rifles?"

"Why would a sniper need a bayonet? The idea is not to get too close to the target."

"Why if they spotted you and snuck around behind your back?"

"They either kill you or you'd spot them and shoot them."

"You have that knife sharpener from Hy-Vee, couldn't you sharpen them?"

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"I can't remember why I asked."

"Getting old are we?"

"If I'm old, I guess I don't need to wear my Sexy Little Things Lace peek-a-boo babydoll, anymore."

"You still have that?"

“Yes and it still fits.”

She was right. Despite our having four kids, her weight was within 1-2 pounds of what it was when we'd met. I suppose I'd put on 5 pounds, but didn't have a gut. Somehow we'd gone from discussing bayonets on sniper rifles to bedroom talk. She was clever that way. I ended up telling Jack we wanted bayonets on the Super Match rifles. He said he was out of M1942 bayonets, but he had two M1905s he could modify. I got out the grocery store knife sharpener (a modified belt sander) and put a good edge on the first 6 bayonets.

In a way, the 100 plus years old bayonets made sense. They were of a higher quality and had been manufactured by the original Springfield Armory and the Rock Island Armory. These weren't Parkerized, either. The leather sheaths had seen better days so I took an animal skin and tanned it. I made new sheaths from the leather. Karen was very happy and I counted my blessings.

o

With the new improvised greenhouse, we were able to grow garden crops. We were careful over what we planted. We put in iceberg lettuce, bell peppers, carrots, radishes and red cabbage so we could have salads. We also planted a row of sweet corn which needs no explanation. Although we had potatoes left, having as many people as we had before and continued to have led us to add those and onions. To satisfy any craving for Mexican fare, we put in Anaheim chili peppers and plum tomatoes. We both liked squash and we had acorn and butternut. Karen would eat summer squash but I'd rather die than eat it.

David showed his mettle when he started puttering around in the greenhouse. He seemed to have a green thumb and it was like Manna from Heaven; even he could pull his own weight. He could be useful for other things, too. He didn't like it, but he got to muck out the stalls in the barn. He started a project composting the manure to use in his greenhouse. Composting manure requires that it be turned, so it became a running joke to say David was out playing in his manure pile. We had more manure than we had composting bins, allowing us to accumulate it for application to the field the following year.

Man, was it quiet. We had no traffic on 100th street for days on end. Sometime in August, a Deputy from Leon went from farm to farm conducting a census of the survivors. He saw the greenhouse, of course, and wondered aloud whether we had food to sell. I had to explain that we were only growing a few crops, the unseasonable vegetables and fruit (tomatoes). I went on to say that my uncle John was providing food to Lamoni and even Osceola. He hadn't been there yet, but he'd be sure to look him up.

I got on the amateur radio and called my uncle to give him a heads up. He told me that they had more customers than food and until they could plant an outdoor garden it

would remain that way. I explained back that the Deputy had really perked up when I mentioned he was supplying Lamoni and Osceola. If that would cause him a problem, call and let us know and we drive up and provide support.

He wanted to know how we were making out and I told him that Jill and I had buried the hatchet and that her husband turned out to be useful because he was quite the gardener. I added that the former owner of his favorite gun store had moved onto the farm. He asked about Jimbo and Susan and I told him they'd returned to Missouri and in the process I'd lost my hired hand.

o

Since the ground wasn't frozen hard, I plowed and Jack disked the 160 for corn, the 160 for beans, and the 80 we planned to put in wheat (triticum) and oats (avena sativa). In the storage building, there were two varieties of wheat, hard white and durum. We could alternate and make pasta flour one year and bread flour the next plus enough heirloom oats and corn for two plantings. I couldn't remember the last time we were done plowing and disking by mid-August. The pile of manure that David couldn't use had been spread on the intended corn field prior to plowing. For that little task, Jack used the loader and I spread the manure.

"Jack and I are going to take that trailer down to Bethany. Did you get everything you want out of it?"

"I believe I did."

"You cleaned out the toilet paper, right?"

"I thought you did."

"Jack and I will unload it and put it in the storage building. There are some of those thirty packs of Charmin like we got at Costco."

"You never see those in grocery stores."

"I think they break them down to the six packs so they can charge more."

"Will it be hard to unload? I can help if Sally watches the kids."

"It was the last thing we put on the truck when we sorted it. No, we won't need help."

It took us about twenty minutes to unload the Charmin and move it to storage. I was a bit concerned about the reaction in Bethany when I told them this was the last trailer load. We had simply dropped off the previous tractors and trailers and if they wanted to go to Chariton, they had the resources. We had extracted a consideration for every

truckload of food. In my humble opinion, the consideration represented a charge for our labor and the risk we took going to Chariton.

“That’s the last trailer load we have. You have four rigs so you can go to Chariton and get more, if that’s your choice.”

“Is that where this all came from? Where do you get off selling us stolen food?”

“It wasn’t stolen, it was salvaged. There’s big difference between the two. Besides, considering what we received in exchange for the loads, it was nothing more than a handling charge for taking the risk of going to Chariton. Let me ask something. If you take a truck or two up there and get more, what will you call it, salvaging or looting?”

“That’s different.”

“How it that different?”

“Because I work for Hy-Vee.”

“Does Hy-Vee pay their drivers wages?”

“Of course, why?”

“Consider our small charges as being labor costs.”

Well, not so small they could be an hourly wage, I’ll admit. Plus, we took a portion of the goods on the trucks as compensation. On the other hand, they didn’t know that and we had no intention of enlightening them.

o

On the 14th of September, we had two visitors driving an old beater of a pickup. They looked pretty rough, needing haircuts, shaves and clean clothes to begin with. Each had a shotgun standing up between them.

“Watch it, they may have handguns.”

“You take the passenger and I’ll take the driver.”

I slipped my P-14 from the holster and held it behind my right leg and Jack did the same. Our Super Match rifles were slung.

“Help you?”

“We’re looking for food.”

“I’m sorry, but we’re barely getting by. The plants in our greenhouse aren’t ready to harvest and we’ve used much of our stored food.”

“But not all, right?”

“We still have a little but it’s just enough to get by. We have three families living here.”

“I only see the two of you; what are you, father and son?”

“He’s Smith, I’m Jones.”

Looking across the passenger compartment of the pickup, I could see Jack pickup and smile just a little. When I diverted my glance, the driver came up with a cheap .22 revolver and pointed it straight at my chest.

“Whoa, wait a minute, what’s that all about?”

“You still have food, we don’t.”

“That’s a big gun you have there.”

“Put your rifles on the ground. Do you have a handgun?”

“No I don’t have one (I have 3).”

I unslung my rifle and lowered it to the ground by the sling careful to not damage it. Once they thought they had us disarmed, they began climbing out of the pickup and walked right into a pair of P-14s. Two shots center mass, one apiece, resolved that conflict.

“I sure wish they hadn’t done that.”

“Why not?”

“Because... now I have to clean my gun.”

“What do you want to do with them?”

“Help me throw them in the back of their pickup. I’ll get my Jeep and you can follow me. We’ll drive across the state line a ways and drop them off.”

“Do you want those guns?”

“Let’s see what they have.”

“Two single shot shotguns and the H&R revolver.”

“Shotguns loaded?”

“I’ll check.”

“Nope, both empty. How many rounds in the revolver?”

I opened it and looked. “Five rounds.”

“They asked for it. Two empty shotguns and a .22 revolver with only five shots. They must have been desperate.”

“What brand are the shotguns?”

“Same brand, H&R. Not a bad shotgun, but cheap, really cheap.”

“Let’s keep the guns, maybe we can trade them off.”

“If you can find someone dumb enough, maybe.”

“The revolver has a removable cylinder.”

“It’s a model 922 H&R and would be okay to plink with but don’t use hyper velocity cartridges. They used a malleable frame until around 1953.”

“High velocity okay?”

“Yes, no problem.”

Like I said, I got my jeep and we drove about half way to Bethany, drove across the median and parked the pickup on the north bound lane. Jack got in the Jeep and we got the hell out of Dodge fast. I don’t know about Jack, but I figure we got lucky that time. It could have been a problem if we’d slung the rifles muzzle up on our strong side instead muzzle down on our weak side. The muzzle down position is generally only used when it’s raining. It turned out to be a damned good idea not to block our pistol hands.

“What was all the shooting about?”

“It was just a couple of guys with their hands out.”

“Did you give them some food?”

“Nope, we killed them.”

“Why?”

“The hand was holding a revolver. The guy had us cold.”

“What did you do?”

“What he said to do; put our rifles on the ground.”

“And?”

“Jack and I had our P-14s out and held behind our right legs. When they got out, we let them have it, one round, center mass. God do I love Gold Dot.”

“What did you do then?”

“Collected their guns and drove the bodies about halfway to Bethany and left the pickup on the northbound side of the road.”

“Good guns?”

“I might keep the revolver for plinking and trade off the shotguns. I sure this was an isolated incident and not a sign of the times. In a PAW, most authors seem to think being in a survival mode is more than simply having shelter and food. They suggest you end up fighting to keep what you have. If those two were an example of we’re going to be up against, no problem. Otherwise, we could have a big problem when a large force of bad guys armed to the teeth shows up and wants to takes us on. We don’t have enough people to have real security.”

I discussed the security problem I foresaw with Jack and David. Jack was quick to agree that even if all the wives pitched in it would only be six against how many. David started to say something and realized the implications of what Jack and I were saying. About then I do believe he would have volunteered to babysit so Karen could fight. He did that thing with his shoulders, raising them and pushing them back that you see men to do signifying that they have some spine.

When he did open his mouth to speak, he pointed out that at least we had an empty mobile home and could possibly find someone willing to help in exchange for a place to stay and food. I didn’t know whether to crap or go blind. I’d seen this same thing come over people in Iraq and once they showed the spine, they didn’t go back for fear of humiliating themselves. Next he dropped a name, Gene Young.

“I’d be willing to bet that Gene Young would be willing to come here and help out. Married guy, early 30’s 3 kids and his wife was expecting. Lives near Bethany, ex-Army or Marine, no he was a Marine. Semper Fi and all that crap is a Marine, right?”

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 14

“That’s their motto, Semper Fidelis.”

“He was in Iraq 3 times, I think. I may be remembering wrong, but it seems like he did 3 9-month tours. By the way, he agrees with everything you say about the M16 and M4. He was a Designated Marksman and used a specially modified M14.”

“They are similar to the M21,” Jack said. “Sally’s rifle is a Super Match too. She has the Harris bipod and the Surefire suppressor, same as I do. The optics on her rifle are the same as the ones you have Will. The only thing missing is the adjustable stock. If he came, he’d need Match grade ammo.”

“I don’t have a shortage of Black Hills, that’s for sure. It seems like every time we shot up one 500-round case, we’d replace it with two.”

“So where do you know this guy from?”

“From work.”

“Just exactly where did you work?”

“Wal-Mart. Gene was a fulltime employee who farmed at night and on weekends. I know he has some firearms, because he bought them from the store. We didn’t sell anything like those M1As you have and I don’t know if he could have afforded one if we did.”

“Where does he live? Rural Route Bethany, Missouri doesn’t really tell us much.”

“I don’t know, I never been to his farm.”

“Jimbo, got your ears on?”

“This is Susan, Jim is in the barn.”

“Ask him to call me when he gets in. I’m looking to locate a part time farmer named Gene Young. All I know about him is that he worked full time for Wal-Mart in Bethany and farmed evenings and weekends. If it helps, he was a Marine.”

“You had trouble?”

“Nothing we couldn’t handle. Two guys showed up with empty shotguns and a \$30 revolver and tried to take on Jack and me.”

“How far did they get?”

“Got the drop on us, but we got them. It’s a long story that I don’t want to broadcast over a radio.”

“Will, got your ears on?”

“Been waiting, must have caught you just when you started milking.”

“Milking was done, we had a mare foal. Gene Young, you say?”

“That’s the name I was given. David says he worked full time at Wal-Mart and did 3 tours in Iraq as a Marine.”

“I think I know who you mean. Why don’t you three drive down here tomorrow and we’ll go look him up. I don’t want to put the directions on the radio and I want to hear in person about those bad guys.”

“Nine okay?”

“Perfect.”

“I’m clear.”

“Me, too.”

o

When we arrived the following morning, Jack and I had to explain about the dead would-be thieves, how they got the drop on us and how we managed to prevail. About thirty questions later, Jimbo understood our thinking about asking Mr. Young and family to move into the empty home. When David pointed out that the guy was a DM, Jimbo wanted to know if we had a good rifle for him. Jack mentioned Sally’s rifle and said while it didn’t have an adjustable stock, he had the M1A/M14 tactical strap-on cheek pad made by Smith Enterprises available.

“Well, if he’s who I think he is, it’s about 4 miles to his farm. He’s farming a 160 and the only livestock I know he has is chickens.”

“Grain farmer?”

“That’s right, corn and soybeans. His equipment is older than dirt and I’ve sometimes wondered how he keeps it running.”

“Have you met him?”

“Not that I can recall. Why don’t you follow me?”

It was a short drive to the farm, taking 6-7 minutes and when we pulled in, a fella just a little younger than me stepped out of the door holding a shotgun. I also notice a flap holster hanging from a pistol belt and a pair of those surplus canvas magazine pouches. When he saw David his posture relaxed, but not much.

“Gene, I see you made it through the war.”

“I made a quick improvised shelter in the basement, David. Don’t think we got much radiation, but only time will tell. What’s up? Something I can do for you?”

“The fella on my left is Will Sherman, my brother-in-law. The man to my right is Jack Smith, a gun dealer from Des Moines. The other fella is one of your neighbors, Jim Ross. We three are living at Will’s place just across the Iowa line. At my suggestion, we came to see if you might be interested in moving up to Will’s farm.”

“Why don’t you come in and we’ll talk it over?”

“Honey, this is David Merrill who I worked with at Wal-Mart; that fella is Will Sherman, that man is Jack Smith and the other fella one of our neighbor’s Jim Ross. Gentlemen, my wife Rose. They’re here to talk to us about moving to Iowa.”

Rose was at that stage of her pregnancy where she was really uncomfortable, probably due in 2-3 weeks. She took a chair and Gene got us empty cups and the coffee pot which he set on a trivet.

“Help yourself to the coffee. Got some creamer and sugar around here somewhere. Now please explain what you have in mind.”

I spoke first. “I understand that you did 3 tours in the sandbox, I was Army National Guard and only did one. David says you were a DM. Marines in general are riflemen so you must have been above average to earn a DM slot.”

“I can generally hit what I aim at. A DM is not the same as a sniper.”

“Why is that?”

“Snipers have more field craft and usually shoot at longer ranges.”

“Ever shoot a .50 cal rifle?”

“Once or twice; why do you have a Barrett?”

“Two McMillan Tac-50s. We have 750gr A-MAX and Mk 211 MP.”

“You’re kidding, right?”

“Thirty-nine and a fraction cans of the Raufoss and a whole lot of ball. The wife and I have Springfield Armory Super Match rifles and so do Jack and his wife Sally. We’d have a Super Match for you to use should you decide to move up to my farm.”

“So what’s the catch?”

“We have housing for four families, but only have three families living there. We had a minor bit of trouble a day or two back with two men looking for food. We realized that when it comes to security, we’re shorthanded. David brought up your name and here we are.”

“How are you supplied with food, you seem to have enough guns?”

“We have more food than guns, I assure you. My herd is up to 40 sows and 40 cows plus we have a large herd of saddle and draft horses. There’s no shortage of chicken, either. We produce biodiesel and ethanol and have two vehicles converted to run on pure ethanol while the others are diesel except for one old utility tractor.”

“My old clunker burns gas and I’m all but out of gas.”

“We have more than enough equipment and can farm by tractor or use horse drawn equipment that I got from the Amish folks near Lamoni. You wouldn’t be any further away from the Harrison County Community Hospital for when the baby comes.”

“Do you want an answer right now?”

“I’m sure Rose and you would like to talk it over. I know that my wife Karen wouldn’t like me making a decision like this without consulting her.”

Rose had a bit of an expectant look on her face. I could tell that she wanted to say something but was holding back. Gene noticed it too.

“Would you excuse us for a moment? Rose and I would like to have a word.”

They left the room and Jimbo made like he was looking in the refrigerator for creamer for his coffee. He held the door wide open to show a nearly empty refrigerator and then closed the door and sat back down. Not only was it empty, it wasn’t running although the kitchen light was on. There was a hand cranked grinder on the counter and part of a bag of popcorn from Sam’s Club sitting on the floor next to the refrigerator. I’m not saying that all they had to eat was corn meal, but little other food was in evidence. Gene and Rose returned to the kitchen and sat down.

“We have a decision, but that will depend on you answer to one question. Are you a prepper or survivalist?”

“Yes. Why would that be important?”

“Whether you are or are not wasn’t important, only your answer was. Had you said no, I’d have told you I had to check out your operation including wherever you stayed while there was fallout. Had I found out you’d lied, I’d have said the deal was off. I could care less, provided you aren’t out to overthrow the government, if we still have a government.”

“The government has done a good job of overthrowing itself. I have nothing to add to that mess. My goal is to provide for my family and the good folks that live and work on my farm. If someone comes to our farm and tries something I think they shouldn’t, I’ll fight them with every ounce of strength in my body.”

“Anyway, our answer is yes. Is the house furnished?”

“No, it’s not beyond a stove, refrigerator and a generator with propane.”

“Do you think what little furniture we have would fit in your two pickups and my old one?”

“We can try. If we can’t get it all, we’ll come back for the rest and bring my trailer if necessary.”

“Rose, go pack the kids clothes and I’ll pack ours. Fellas, would you just start loading furniture?”

The four of us didn’t take over an hour to load everything they had. Part of that was because they didn’t have much and part of it was we’d learned how to pack really well when we brought the furniture to the homes in the beginning and later moved Jim and Susan’s back. I got on the radio in my pickup and suggested that Karen be prepared to serve a good hot meal to a group of hungry people, explaining about the apparent lack of food. She said she had a large pot of homemade beef soup with vegetables going and she’d baked bread.

If they had been on short rations, it might be a good idea to start the family on soup anyway and I was willing to bet that a bowl of soup, a slice of bread and a glass of milk would be about all their children could handle. The kids were 6, 4 and 2, stair steps, and all boys. Their names were Gene Jr., Ryan and Neal.

The pickup with the dead guys in back was missing from I-35. I didn’t much think about it on the way down and can’t say whether it was there or not, but it was gone when we drove north. All of the beds were on Jim’s pickup so when we arrived at the farm, we unloaded them first. He headed home and we went in to see about getting the Young family something to eat. After they ate, the kids fell asleep on the sofa and we finished putting the furniture in the home. Karen came by with a box of food she said was just for breakfast and we’d see about getting them set up tomorrow.

Jack got Sally's rifle, the cheek pad and a box of magazines. I went after a case of Black Hill 175gr BTHP match. I thought that Gene had a M1911 and he did, in a manner of speaking, it was a Springfield Armory 1911A1 GI .45 High Capacity Model. It was loaded with FMJ ammo. I returned home and got a second case of Black Hills and two boxes of Gold Dot (100 rounds). It would take 65 rounds just to fill his magazines. I told them that we were having dessert and if they wanted, they could have dessert and coffee before we helped them get their kids home and in bed.

"Would you mind giving me a tour, tonight?"

"Not at all; let me caution you, you might see a few surprises."

We went to the basement and he got a firsthand look at some of the food we had. I showed Gene how to access the tunnel to the shelter and pointed out the surprises stacked along the wall of the tunnel.

"Where did you get those? The Army went to the M136 AT-4 and only the Corps uses them."

"The Army resumed using them in Iraq. They also discontinued the M-61 and I have about 250 of those plus the same number of M-67s and Mk3A2 concussion. There is every color of smoke, including Willy Pete. You can see the Raufoss and the open can is in my gun closet in the shelter. I have magazines already loaded for both Tac-50 rifles."

"Where are your M16s?"

"I don't have any because I do not like them. As far as I'm concerned, they're a Piece Of Sh*t rifle that will get you killed quicker than a hand grenade. Standard load out is 210 rounds. By the time you go through that many rounds, you have to open it and lube the crap out of it. Three more magazines and you're up the creek. We do have 5.56 rifles, but they're Mini-14s with 30 round magazines. Our principal firearm is the Springfield Armory M1A."

"What's the ammo in the cans?"

"South African surplus, I bought a pallet load of sixty 1,260-round cans. That's 75,000 rounds."

"Where are the machineguns?"

"Don't have any. Probably should, they can't lock me up any longer than they can now with the Raufoss, grenades and LAWs. They probably have them at Camp Dodge, but I didn't go looking."

“Even one machinegun might make the difference if the farm were attacked by a large force. Two would be better, the main gun and a backup in case it failed.”

“What would you recommend?”

“Mike 240 Bravo. A heavy machinegun is just that, heavy. Figure around 175 pounds for gun, tripod and some ammo. The Mike 240 Bravo, while crew served, can get by with a single operator from a fixed position. I said Bravo because it has the pintle mount and can be fired from a tripod.”

“They’re issued with two barrels and we’d need a fair amount of ammo. We could save the links and link some of that SA, but that would be awfully time consuming.”

“I sleep on it and come up with something. What did you do in the Army?”

“Mostly drove a M1114. Got switched around twice, but I started for a Sergeant whose father wrote Patriot Fiction. That’s what got me started into preparing. My Dad and sister were in an accident on the way to pick me up at Camp Dodge the day we got home. We got the farm essentially free and clear without estate taxes and one hell of a chunk of insurance. On top of that, I was single and had saved a bunch of money to buy a new car when I got home. A whole lot of money went into firearms, accessories and ammo. I kept my Jeep and Dad had a Ford F-550 pickup I ended up with. My sister and I had a falling out and she sold me her half of the farm for book value or about 20 cents or less on the dollar.”

“How big is the farm?”

“It’s a full section with about 540 acres arable. We have 400 acres in beans and corn, 60 acres of alfalfa hay, 80 acres of oats and 100 acres that was too hilly to farm. I planned to plant the oat field 50/50 in oats and wheat. You’ll get free housing, food, fuel and a fair wage. We have a good water supply and a two year stock of seed and fertilizer plus more manure than we can use. At any given time there are between 80 and 120 cattle, 40 sows and about 400 plus pigs. We have two 5 year old draft teams and their foals. We started the saddle horse operation with 5 bred mares and a stallion and that herd has tripled. The original horses were trained to both harness and saddle and I might try and get the Amish breeder I bought them from to lend a hand to train the rest.”

“I’ve got 160 and the soil has been overworked. It’s been hard to get good yields and I’m barely making the mortgage payments. Without working at Wal-Mart we’d have lost the place. Wouldn’t be the first I suppose, but I’ve put every free hour in the place trying to make a go of it.”

“How big is your loan?”

“Right at fifty.”

“What would it take to make it work?”

“Seed, fertilizer, good weather and good yields for a change.”

“How have you been planting?”

“Everything out of the homestead itself is either in beans or corn.”

“Seventy some acres of each?”

“Eighty corn and whatever is left in beans.”

“While you’re thinking about security, I’ll be thinking about what I can do to help with your farm. You can pretty much figure that Wal-Mart will be a long time reopening.”

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“Jimbo, will you be home tomorrow?”

“Have a problem?”

“In a way, yes and I need your advice.”

“Okay, same bat channel, same bat time.”

“Okay you’re here, what the problem?”

“Gene’s farm and his low yields.”

“He probably needs some combination of potash, lime and anhydrous ammonia.”

“Is there any way to find out?”

“We could take samples and ask the Extension Service to test them. I thought you wanted him on your farm.”

“I do, but if he could get his farm to produce some good crops, he could pay off the mortgage. I could supply the seed and some fertilizer, depending on what he needed.”

“The previous owner used manure only and never had the soil tested once. Getting that farm up to speed could get expensive; does he have the money?”

“I doubt it, but Karen and I are rather well off and I could guarantee his loan with bank, to keep the pressure off until he could produce one crop of nothing but heirloom seeds.”

“Non-hybrids? They would put him in the seed corn/beans business.”

“Can you think of a better idea?”

“Not off the top of my head.”

“Let’s go get the samples and take them to Bethany.”

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We had the test results in a week. They were quite specific, outlining the soil treatments required. Jim said we could use his tractor, plow and disk once we had the soil treated. I had to provide the diesel fuel, chemicals, etc. We incorporated the potash and lime and Jim Jr. did the plowing. I lined up a supply of anhydrous for half the land or about 77 acres at the recommended rate of application. Finally I went to talk to Gene’s banker with Gene in tow.

“I’ve been working on Gene’s farm and except for the application in the spring it should produce very good yields. Gene needs time to plant, raise and harvest the crops. I came to guarantee his loan.”

“How do you propose to do that?”

“Well, I could put up my farm for security, but I don’t want to do that. I could deposit a sum equal to the loan balance in a high interest saving account. My last choice would be to buy up the loan, at a discount.”

“How much would you pay?”

“How much would you get if you decided to factor the loan?”

“Bank loans aren’t typically factored. That’s more a tool for selling accounts receivable.”

“Okay, I’m not an expert on factoring, but how much would you sell the loan for, in cash?”

“Maybe 95%.”

“I was thinking more like 75%”

“I don’t see how we could go below 90%.”

“I don’t see how I could go over 80%.”

“Eighty- five; subject to the approval of the directors.”

“I’ll hold the offer open two days. The terms will be cash and I’ll want a lien release on the title.”

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“What did you just do?”

“I think I bought your loan for 85 cents on the dollar. That will leave an approximate balance of \$42,500. You should be able to pay me off in a year or two. Jim Ross Jr. has your fields all plowed and will disk and drag in the spring. It’s costing me the fuel and labor, but with you working here, I’ll benefit more than you will.”

“I left the thermostat set at 55°. I hope we don’t run out of propane.”

“We’ll get the delivery truck and top your tank off. You’ll find that we invested some thought in our actions after we came out of the shelter.”

“Rose won’t be much help.”

“You’d be surprised, Gene. She can watch our 4 kids freeing up Karen. Karen is an extremely competent marksman.”

“But Jack gave me his wife’s rifle.”

“And I’ll give her a Standard model M1A to replace it, if Jack doesn’t already have a replacement.”

“So, everything is ready for spring, provided we have a spring?”

“Just so. You’re helping us with our short one coming and in return, we’ll use you’re 160 for grain crops, if spring does indeed come.”

“Does anyone know how much you’ve accumulated?”

“Most of it came from Jack or a guy I knew in the Iowa National Guard. The Ross family knows, of course, and the guy who bought out Jack’s store. That’s about it, we don’t advertise.”

“Does either Sheriff know anything? That could mean trouble.”

“The only thing the Sheriff of Decatur County knows is that we have CCWs. The only thing the Sheriff of Harrison County knows is that we supplied four trailer loads of food to the Hy-Vee store in Bethany. Like I said before, we don’t advertise; I hate like the dickens to have any authority figure show up and demand we turn over what we have ‘for the good of the community’.”

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 15

“What about the Amish? They know what you have.”

“Only so far as the horses and horse drawn implements.”

“Are they Older order Amish or the German Group from the Amana Colonies?”

“I don’t know, is it important?”

“I suppose not. Do you have a range here? I’d like to check the sighting on the rifle.”

“I’ll get my rifle, some ammo and I’ll show you where we shoot.”

“Bring a Tac-50; I’d like to work with one of those.”

“Karen, do you mind if I let Gene use your Tac-50?”

“Be my guest. His wife Rose is close to popping, it could be any day now.”

“At the first sign of labor, we’d better get her to the hospital in Bethany. I’ll let him shoot your rifle, but I doubt there will be any changes to the sights.”

As a practical matter, I selected only the magazines containing the A-MAX. We had more of it than we did Mk 211 and I thought that in a pinch the A-MAX would be easier to replace. Had I not bought the pallet of SA surplus, it would not have seemed that we had so much ammo, I was generally following TOMs rule of 5,000-round per rifle.

We had a good session on the range. Gene was a distinguished shot and I tried my best to match his performance. I didn’t, but I came close. His personal shotgun was a Mossberg 590 but not the Marine Corps version. He explained that they wanted too much extra money for the extra features the Marine Corps Model had. I told him we had 4 of the 590A1s between Jack and me, so that wouldn’t present a problem. I added that we had a few boxes of flechettes, Brenneke slugs and plenty of 00 buck.

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Karen drove Rose to the hospital while Gene and I were in Des Moines. We were looking for new clothing for his boys; they had outgrown nearly everything they had. Rose and he were handing down the stair steps, but Gene Jr. was in a growth spurt. We tried several stores before we found what he was looking for. While we were at it, I got more clothing for our four. When we’d finished up, Gene asked me if I planned on going to Camp Dodge.

“I hadn’t planned on it. Are you still chomping at the bit to get a couple of Mike 240 Bravos?”

“They could make all the difference.”

“I have no idea where they’re stored or which bunker holds the ammo.”

“Don’t worry about it, I do; we were given a tour a few years back.”

“Let’s do it.”

It was almost as easy as picking grapes off a vine. Gene got the two machine guns with their spare barrels, found more barrels and set the headspace and we pretty much filled the pickup with ammo. The belts contained M276 Dim Tracer and M973 AP. We avoided the SRTA because of its limited range. He brought the head spacing gauges back with him, just in case.

When we arrived home, Jill told Jim that Rose was at the hospital having her baby. He was low on gas and asked to borrow my Jeep. I told him that I’d come too, for moral support. When we arrived, Karen met us and told Gene which room Rose was in and that they had a healthy newborn daughter. I gave him the keys to the Jeep and she and I returned home.

“I picked out clothing I thought might fit, honey. I got three different sizes plus an assortment of sneakers. I figured we could get them leather shoes at Wal-Mart in Bethany.”

“What’s with the ammo, don’t we have enough?”

“We don’t have any belted ammo.”

“You got a machine gun, didn’t you?”

“No, we got two. I wasn’t overly excited at the prospect, but Gene all but insisted. He claims if a large group comes here, it could make all the difference.”

“What caliber?”

“.30 caliber, the .50 caliber are crew served and too heavy.”

“It reminds me of when Jill asked you where the howitzer was.”

“Well, we don’t have any, you know that.”

“If we divided up all the weapons available here and what Mom and Dad have, I think we could equip a Platoon of fighting men for the duration, however long that is.”

“No doubt. I’d rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it.”

“When you were in Iraq, how much did you shoot your M16?”

“We burned up more ammo on the range than we did in actual fighting. I doubt I fired more than 1,000-rounds between the range and the few fire fights we got in.”

“And, your rifle worked flawlessly?”

“I kept it clean. The one thing I wouldn’t have wanted to do was get in an extended fire fight. It’s that direct gas impingement system. The rifle gets dirty too quickly and you get failures to feed, failures to eject, stovepipes, double feeds and all sorts of problems. The only solution is a thorough cleaning and you can’t do that in the middle of a fire fight.”

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One of the problems the National Guard always had was that they were at the end of the food chain. When a new weapon or system was developed, it usually went to Special Forces and later Regular Army. The improvement would be scheduled for the Guard, but there never seemed to be enough money to buy what the Guard needed. As a consequence, the Guard rarely got the new equipment until they were in training to be deployed or actually deployed. I had trained on an M16A1 and only got an A2 and later M4 when we deployed.

An example of that policy was the Knight’s Armament Corporation’s M110 SASS, the newest sniper rifle intended to replace the M21 and M24 SWS. KAC was having trouble filling the orders from the military and they weren’t even available to LEOs.

I thought that a hushpuppy was an American food consisting of small cornmeal breads that are deep fried in a spherical or oblong shape. There was also a brand of shoes called Hush Puppies. Jack explained that the Hush Puppy was the Navy’s Mk 2 suppressor developed for the SEALs in Vietnam. It had one advantage and one disadvantage: it was quiet when it was new; but after a magazine of bullets went through the wipers, it got loud until the wipers were replaced. The wipers were made of rubber and totally blocked the gas, but they were enlarged with every shot. They got their name from the SEALs using them to kill dogs in Vietnamese villages. They was one other advantage to a Hush Puppy, you could make your own.

“That’s nice, but it won’t do us much good.”

“How do you figure Will?”

“How are you going to attach them to the pistols, with super glue?”

“I planned to screw them on. Would super glue work better?” he asked feigning ignorance.

“You have threaded barrels?”

“In and of themselves, about the only place they’re illegal was California, before the war. They will fit, with minor adjustments, about any M1911 design handgun.”

“Including the Para-Ordinance P-14?”

“I have threaded P-14 barrels because both Sally and I have P-14s.

“Is there any reason why we should have suppressors for the pistols?”

“No, but I wanted to let you know we had the option if you thought it was necessary.”

“I appreciate that Jack. I think we’ll just stick with the Surefire suppressors.”

We had toys, enough to make an Army or Marine unit proud. Gene placed the two Mike 240 Bravos, mounted on tripods, covering them with camouflage tarps. Our timing was good because it started snowing the next week. It was later this year, more like a normal winter and the amount of snowfall was within the range of the average for the area. While accumulating information on my computer, I recalled TOM saying he had this and that file on his computer and giving a list of the places he’d done research. While I may not have had the same files he had, yet I probably had nearly as many, at last count over 500,000.

TOM said he was trying to educate and entertain. I guess that’s where he got the idea of including the URLs (Uniform Resource Locators, or URLs, used as addresses on the World Wide Web to indicate the virtual location of a website or document) for most of the sources he used. I’ve also noticed that I’ve picked up some of his writing style. He went from one thought to another, but if you considered the flow, one was related to or naturally followed the other.

Gene took Jim’s place helping with the livestock and Jack began helping David in the garden. David was referring to various books and planting his crops in the greenhouse to produce maximum production. While we weren’t producing enough inside the greenhouse to provide large quantities to Bethany, there was pretty much a continual flow of goods to Hy-Vee.

They were still picking up the milk we produced but bought biodiesel for their truck. I was charging \$6 a gallon although I’m reasonably sure our cost was considerably less. We continued to produce ethanol but not all of it got denatured and used as vehicle fuel. I got an Amish craftsman to build us white oak casks which we charred and filled with 125 proof liquor. Since I didn’t have a large filtering vat filled with sugar maple charcoal, it was bourbon, not Tennessee drinking whiskey.

That was another of TOM's ideas that I got from his trilogy titled, *An Unexpected Outcome*, *A Lady for All Seasons* and *The Odyssey*. We did have the ingredients listed, but had to experiment to get a good recipe. I'm sure that every brewer had done the same thing, why did Jack Daniel's call his whiskey Old Number 7?

In a PAW, agencies like the BATFE, if they still exist, didn't have the time or personnel to check out everyone making a little moonshine or homemade bourbon. We didn't box it up and sell it by the case; we sold individual 1 liter bottles. They were labeled but revealed no information that could be traced back to the farm and they lacked tax stamps. We had one outlet, The Spirit Shoppe.

We produced biodiesel five days a week; the generator used anywhere from 1.2 to 4.7gph – 28.8 to 112.8 gallons per day. Running the processor at full capacity, we could produce 500 gallons per day, in two batches, although we usually produced only one. On some days, we produced none at all, either lacking storage space for the fuel or oil to convert.

Ninety-nine percent of the time, it was quiet and the only sounds were from the generators and the livestock and it was peaceful. We spent some of the time on salvage operations. We couldn't produce motor oil for the generators or vehicles so we had to search around. Our favorite place to look was the oil change shops and our second favorite was automobile dealers. Both had oil in 55-gallon drums and some had filters to take and setback for our vehicles. The extra filters I had on hand for my generator also worked on the propane generators.

If only one man and his family survived a GTW, would there be enough supplies to keep them going forever? The answer, I surmised was probably yes, provided you could find them. Of course, not being the sole survivors meant we had competition for the available supplies. Jim and Susan's standby generator ran on propane, so we got in the habit of trading the diesel for propane.

Our weapons were mostly from a previous era, we didn't have the latest that the government was buying for the frontline troops and the Special Forces. The FN SCAR was well accepted among Special Forces as were other developments like their new sniper rifle made by Knight's Armaments. Newer doesn't always mean better. Russian snipers during WW II were using a 50 year old rifle for sniping while we generally used a 40 year old rifle. There is no perfect rifle. While we liked the M14 design, it was heavy, the ammo was heavy and the overall length didn't lend itself to CQB. It didn't matter; we weren't clearing houses in Mosul.

Instead, we worked on constructing an insulated, heated, glassed in enclosure on the roof of the barn. Only 6' off the soil covering the overhead, it gave us a view of the farm's southern exposure for the full mile. Jack produced another trick from his bag, 2nd generation night vision. Not the latest or greatest, it fulfilled its function admirably. Throughout the winter, one of we four men was in the OP. It was about the

most boring thing I'd ever experienced and Jack, David and Gene agreed. Gene pointed out that the day after we discontinued the lookout, we'd probably get attacked. It wasn't something we could keep up forever, either. Once we got into the fields, we'd probably need to ask our wives to take over for us.

Anyway, October came and went and we entered November. Our wives started planning Thanksgiving dinner because we had a lot to be thankful for. We didn't have any turkey left in the freezers so they decided on a Cure 81 ham. There were canned yams (sweet potatoes) on the shelf, potatoes to mash, an assortment of vegetables, cans of cranberry sauce plus the ham gravy they'd make and the homemade bread. Compared to what some people probably had to eat, it was an extraordinary feast.

"Father, we thank you for this feast. We have food to eat, a roof over our heads and a means to protect ourselves from those the Devil would send to take what you have provided. We have a new baby with us this year, another blessing, and we thank you for little Rose. Amen."

"You were on a roll, what happened, run out of steam?"

"You know, I just didn't know where to begin. I'll relieve Gene so he can eat and then someone can relieve me so I can eat."

"I'll do it," David offered.

Forty-five minutes later, I was relieved.

"Anything?"

"I haven't seen a thing. I hope you didn't overeat; I wouldn't want you falling asleep."

"I'm good; I didn't gorge myself and planned to go back for seconds."

"Well, I'll see you in a while."

"Wait, what's that on the far west edge of the property?"

"Let me check with the binoculars. Um, well crap, it's a SUV, and it looks to me like there are four people inside. You'd better call Jack and Gene. Tell Gene to man the west machine gun and Jack to join us here. We'd better get our wives standing by, just in case."

Rose was elected to watch the 8 kids and Karen, Sally and Jill came up to the roof of the barn with Jack. Karen was carrying her rifle and my Tac-50. I unfolded a tarp and got the big rifle set up, passing the binoculars off. Through my scope, I could

see a man driving, a woman on the passenger side and two kids in back, teenagers, unless I missed my guess.

The SUV was moving along the road slowly, apparently looking for someone or something. Coupled with the fact that the road was slick, it was probably a good idea. Jack was the first to say something.

“I’ll be damned; that’s the guy who bought the store from me. That’s his wife too, but I don’t know his kids.”

“Did he have teenagers?”

“Yes, he did.”

“Gene, this is Will, they may be friendly; it’s the guy who bought the gun store in Des Moines from Jack.”

I can’t say why I didn’t recognize him; maybe it was the moustache or possibly the longer hair. The women returned to the house and I was fairly sure Karen was adding 4 more plates to the table. David stayed in the OP and we all returned to ground level, waiting for the SUV to pull in. It did and the man got out.

“Jack?”

“Barney, I see you found me.”

“I suspected that you might end up with our favorite customer. I had one hell of a time finding this place. The roads haven’t been plowed and they’re as slick as glass. We left Des Moines about 5 hours ago and I was down to a quarter tank of gas.”

“Why so little?”

“I’ve been looking for two hours, checking every mailbox.”

“Get your family and come into the house; it’s cold out. Have you eaten?”

“Not since breakfast. Oh, you’re having Thanksgiving dinner. We wouldn’t want to impose.”

“Nonsense, we have more than we can eat.”

Not only had they not eaten since breakfast, I rather doubt they had breakfast. We visited while we ate. Some were eating pumpkin pie with dream whip while others, like me, were eating Thanksgiving dinner. Gene had eaten dinner and dessert and he relived David so David could have pie.

Des Moines had undergone some changes and they weren't all good. Barney had moved the inventory from the store to his basement. He said it would take a pickup pulling a large trailer to haul the entire lot. They had been lucky, having stocked up at Costco the day before the war. He did mention that he was getting awfully sick of beans and rice. They had sheltered in the basement and stayed there the first year, going through a significant portion of their food supply. It was supplemented with a garden planted with hybrid seeds and they'd used a Coleman stove and a water bath canner to preserve the food.

He took small quantities of ammo to his store two days a week and traded it for additional food and enough fuel to keep his SUV running. He commented that the bodies of would be thieves were taken away and dumped. That sounded familiar. He had finally gotten down to just enough ammo to supply the guns his family planned to use, three M1A Standard models and one Mini-14. His handgun was an H&K USP Tactical, while his boys and wife had Browning Hi-Powers; used, but good used.

"The average American," he said, "Barely puts enough rounds through a Hi-Power to break it in, let alone wear it out. The first thing you do when you get one is remove that magazine safety so you have a reasonable trigger pull."

"What kind of ammo do you use?"

"I prefer Speer, but I use whatever is available. I'm about out of Gold Dot and have some Federal Hydra Shok."

"Would you say your situation in Des Moines remains tenable?"

"I'd say that it's getting worse by the day and we're not going to have any choice except to bug out."

"Where would you go?"

"Are you asking if I have a prepared bug out location? We don't, so we'll probably end up in some national park or forest."

"Do you know anything about farming?"

"I really only have two skills, I know firearms and I know horses. While I lived in the city, I spent a lot of time at my cousin's farm and they had a large herd of horses. He taught me all I could absorb over the years so I can train them to saddle or harness. I can't make a saddle, but if I have the leather, I can make harnesses."

"Are you familiar with horse drawn equipment?"

“Only in passing; I’ve driven a buggy and a wagon.”

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We put Barney, Jane, Brad and Bill up in the house until we could find another mobile home, propane tank, and generator and move their possessions. Karen and I discussed it first and then I discussed it with Jack, David and Gene. Having the additional skill of a horseman on the farm would add to our skill set and like Barney said, he knew horses and firearms.

Some things proved harder to find than others. A mobile home was the easy part, the generator was very difficult while the propane tank came from the same source as we had been using. We had to thaw the ground so we could install new water and sewer lines and level the spot for the home. We found the generator at Cummins Central Power in Cedar Rapids. Cummins had 5 locations in the immediate area, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Omaha, Rock Island and Kansas City. We scratched Omaha and Kansas City from the list.

The good part of our search for a generator was the extra parts and we found multiple cases of oil filters and both drums and cans of oil. We picked up several of the Onan Homesite 6500 portable generators with batteries and wheel kits to carry in our vehicles.

We had them moved in the day before Christmas and Karen and the ladies had something planned for Christmas Eve. There weren’t much in the way of Christmas presents, the kids all got some new clothes, I passed out several cases of the SA surplus and a small portion of my Lawman and Gold Dot. We had eggnog laced with the homemade bourbon for the adults and plain for the kids. Sally read the Nativity story for the kids, mainly. (Luke, not Matthew)

As it happens, our group, now consisting of 5 families in the main, and Jimbo and Susan down by Bethany, was composed entirely of Christians of various denominations. Jill and I plus our spouses were Methodists. Jimbo and Susan and Gene and Rose were Baptists. Jack and Sally belonged to the Presbyterian Church, while Barney’s family belonged to an Evangelical sect of the Lutheran Church.

From the viewpoint of security, we had gained 4 more guns to use against marauders. In the beginning, the boys thought it was great fun to take a guard tour in the OP. That didn’t last long and they soon became bored with it just as the remainder of us had become. However, with more people, the shifts were fewer and since we had an odd number of people, you never pulled the same shift on your next tour of duty.

Around late February or early March, it began to warm up and it looked like we’d be able to plant. Jimbo confirmed as much on the radio and said they’d put in Gene’s

crops when they finished planting theirs. We made a trip to Jim's farm to distribute the fertilizer and seed and I reminded him he'd have to save back seed.

"I thought you said that you were giving me all heirloom seeds to plant his farm."

"I did."

"Well, then, we'll have to harvest all of it as seed that he can sell as seed and get his seed business going."

"Don't mind me, sometimes it seems like I have too many irons in the fire. That new fella, Barney, will take care of our horses, including the farrier work. David is running the greenhouse and garden, Gene is helping with the chores and farming and Jack generally helps David. David says our garden this year should be big enough to supply a good share of the fresh food Bethany will require."

"How long has it been?"

"How long has what been?"

"How long have you been on a dead run? If I had to guess, I'd say ever since you got home from Iraq. Would I be right?"

"You would. It has been worth it in one sense, Karen and I are well off, we have 4 great kids and we have all the basics, air, shelter, water and food. We're becoming more secure as time passes and we add additional people living on the farm. It seems to average out around two fighting people per family. We added those machineguns last fall and..."

"What machineguns?"

"Gene wanted two Mike 240 Bravos and we got them and belted ammo from Camp Dodge."

"Where's mine?"

"I didn't know you wanted one."

"I hadn't given it any thought, but if they're available, it seems foolish not to have one. Heard any news?"

"I haven't been on the amateur bands much."

"No; the Des Moines radio station, WHO."

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 16

“They started out transmitting about 16 hours a day with an hour devoted to state and national news around noon. Then, they cut to 12 hours and then six hours. Now, they broadcast about two hours per day, one hour of local and one hour of state and national. I stopped listening to them a long time back; it was almost as if they were playing a tape loop.”

“Same stuff, different day?”

“Basically. They’d run a list of the latest attacks against people and property, list those murdered and play an announcement from the Governor urging calm. I’m positive that was a tape; it contained the same small error, a mispronunciation.”

“How about we go up to Camp Dodge and get us one of these machineguns?”

“We’ll have to take Gene, he has the gauges to set the headspace and you’ll need extra barrels. I didn’t see where he got the extra barrels because I was busy loading ammo.”

“Hell, the more the merrier. Susan can come up and spend the day with Karen and the grandchildren and Jim can join us for the trip; how about tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow works for me; 9am?”

“More like 7am.”

“We’ll try to have the milking done by then.”

One thing I should have invested in was a Surge milking system that piped the milk directly to the tank and only used a set of teatcups. We were still using the Surge hanging milker. Prior to milking a cow, a large wide leather strap called a surcingle was put around the cow, across the cow's lower back. The milker device and collection tank hung underneath the cow from the strap. This innovation allowed the cow to move around naturally during the milking process rather than having to stand perfectly still over a bucket on the floor. I was two generations behind the latest system, but grateful we didn’t have to milk by hand. Although Surge went out of business in 1999, you could still get parts because you couldn’t wear out most of the milking system.

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“Ready?”

“Give us a minute to wash up the milking machines and grab a bite to eat. You’re early.”

“Six forty-five close enough for government work.”

“May be, but you know we have to wash the equipment and you wouldn’t want our bellies complaining all the way to Camp Dodge.”

“We didn’t eat either; I figured you’d still be milking. What’s for breakfast?”

“Karen put cinnamon rolls in the oven and we have plenty of eggs, so you can have bacon and eggs, ham and eggs, rolls or whatever you want.”

“Sounds like 750 lawyers on the bottom of the ocean.”

Jimbo ate three eggs, a ham steak and two cinnamon rolls. We all used the bathroom and got in the F-550 to go to Camp Dodge. We were lightly armed, 3 M1A Super Matches and 1 H&K 91. Everyone had a .45 loaded with Gold Dot because, well just because. The roads were fair and we made Johnston in less than 3 hours. The gate was standing open, a new development. Gene and Jimbo went for the Mike 240 Bravo and Jim and I looked for more of the belted 7.62 NATO. We eventually found it, but in the process came across a few other things that might come in handy. It was in the area of non-lethal ordnance. We had M6/A1s, M7/A1/A2/A3s; M25A2s and M84s.

In the lethal area, add about 125 cans of 7.62x51mm, the last we could find. The ammunition box contains two cartons. Each carton has a bandoleer for carrying purposes. Each carton contains 100 rounds and weighs about 7 pounds. Ammunition in the bandoleers may be linked together, attached to the hanger assembly, and fired from the container or the bandoleers may be removed for firing. (FM 3-22.68 §3.3d Packaging) By the time we had everything loaded, Gene and Jimbo were standing out front with the machinegun and 4 spare barrels.

“Man, I sure wish Maid Rite was open.”

“Are you still on that kick? Don’t you have some at home?”

“We don’t have much left. Maybe I should stop by my Uncle John’s and see if they can spare some.”

“How are they doing?” Jimbo asked.

“Jack and I sometimes talk on the radio. They seem to be doing okay. They planted in a greenhouse last year, and were feeding Lamoni and Osceola.”

“When did you erect your greenhouse?”

“Just before winter.”

“We helped with that and took off for home when it was done,” Jimbo added.

“Jim and I picked up some non-lethal items at Camp Dodge.”

“What for? Are you going to use non-lethal ordnance on bad guys?”

“We may not be able to tell if they’re bad guys. I like having alternatives. We can always blow them up.”

“Not to change the subject, but is your diesel tank full?”

“Yeah Jimbo, it’s full. I added PRI-D and anti-gel to keep it as good as possible.”

“I thought you didn’t need PRI-D with biodiesel.”

“Maybe not with B-100, but we’re not there yet. To tell you the truth, I don’t know and just keep adding it.”

“What’s this about PRI-Flow? I can’t say that I ever heard of that.”

“I tripped across a reference somewhere on the web and couldn’t find it on their website. So I searched for PRI-Flow and ended up at their website on a page not on their menu.”

“Do you remember where you found it?”

“What difference does it make, there is no internet.”

“Did something happen while you were in Iraq?”

“What do you mean? The day I got home my Dad and sister were in an auto accident where he was killed. Is that what you mean?”

“No, before that, did anything unusual or special happen?”

“About the only thing I recall is Danny Sesker being killed. It was an IED and he didn’t know what hit him.”

“What was it like?”

“Gene, you can tell him better than I can, you did three tours.”

“It was utterly insane. You never knew what was going to happen next. One day you might be in Anbar and a week later in Diyala or Basra. You’d do a job and get pulled to go someplace else, maybe Baghdad or Kirkuk or Karbala. The Army had it different than we did. Many of them were assigned to a location for the duration of their 12 month tour. They do the same thing over and over, like escorting convoys, for example. The problem with that even without trying they established patterns and the insurgents learned those patterns and took advantage of it.”

“Where were you Will?”

“Diyala, at a FOB.”

“Doing what?”

“Mostly convoy escort.”

“You were infantry?”

“No, we were military police. We spent 4 months at Ft. Lewis getting training.”

“So was it like what they say, hours of boredom followed by seconds of sheer terror?”

“Not for me, but it may have been different for Gene. You realized that the people on the other side had weapons and given the chance would use them on you. At one time or another, we all came to the realization that we could get killed at any moment. We had Dust-off’s just like they had in Vietnam, generally with Blackhawks. If you weren’t killed outright your chance of dying fell to 1 in 11. I think more of us worried about being wounded than killed. That’s one of the reasons so many of us had combat lifesaver training. If we could keep an injured comrade going until the Dust-off, his chances were good.”

“The trauma surgeons were the best around. They could usually get you patched up enough to make the flight to Ramstein. From there, you might end up at Walter Reed or Brooke, just to name two. I don’t know what hospitals the Marines used, but I’d imagine they include North Island plus their fleet of hospital ships.”

“Gene what about it, did you make it to a hospital during your three tours?”

“Yeah, but just to get a band-aid. Took a hit or two in my body armor, but those are mostly ice pack injuries.”

“Gene, I suppose your experience was different.”

“Had to be, I was the DM. It’s not like regular infantry, you see each person you shoot and know whether or not you took them down. If you hit them you either kill them or wound them. The dead don’t require help, but occasional they try to help some guy you just wounded, giving you more targets; that’s why I like the M21; it made it easy to take out three or four. But, I was a Marine just like all the others except I had a more powerful rifle with greater range. The snipers used the specially built M-40s.”

“You’re going to have to give us the short course on this machinegun.”

“Let’s go to the range I run you through the basics.”

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Although thoroughly prepared for an attack, none came. I thought, maybe they’re right, I’m suffering some PTSD and it’s made me paranoid. The crops this year were primarily intended to produce vast quantities of heirloom seeds, which would give other farmers the seeds they lacked to plant crops. Because we still had power equipment, we grew the normal amount of crops, 200 acres each of corn and beans, 40 acres each of oats and wheat and 60 acres of alfalfa.

Jimbo and Jim planted their usual and planted 80 acres of corn on Gene’s farm. Our garden was nearly triple in size, taking advantage of the 100 acres I couldn’t farm. It was good that we had enough subsoil moisture because it didn’t rain early on. Just as I began to fear a drought, we had a long gentle rain followed shortly thereafter by a massive thunderstorm with high winds.

We began harvesting the garden, canning half and taking the other half to Bethany where a Farmer’s Market had been set up in the Hy-Vee parking lot. Most of the days we attended, we sold out before noon. We were accepting gold, silver, junk silver and Mason jars in trade. I let Karen, Susan or Jill decide if they’d give food to a hungry family without requiring payment. When the occasion arose, they’d get the name and address and set back a small quantity of food which they delivered after they closed up shop. It really got to Karen because when they delivered the goods, the gratitude was overwhelming.

As far as accumulating a ton of gold and silver went, we didn’t. We had plenty of Mason jars, and lids. Most of the silver we saw was of the junk silver variety. A one ounce silver Eagle was rare and a fractional gold Eagle even rarer. Considering how much surplus SA 7.62 NATO I had, we usually took a battle pack or two and sold/traded the ammo by the 20-round box.

The summer was good to us, ample sunshine, warm days and sufficient water. The crop yields would have been disappointing had we not considered what we were using for seed. In plain English, the seed we were using is used by seed companies to

produce hybrid seed. The normal yield of 175 bushels per acre for hybrid seed went by the way side and we had an especially good year, getting 105 (average) bushels per acre on the corn and a resounding yield of 35 bushels per acre on soybeans.

Gene's old worn out tractor was hauled to town and rebuilt from the ground up, to the extent possible, using available parts. He traded seed corn for enough gasoline to farm the next year and I gave him enough PRI-G to restore the gas and keep it stable. We sold pork and beef to Hy-Vee and I have no idea where they came up with the gold, but it was paid for in gold Eagles. Seems to me I'd heard something about one of the bankers in Bethany being fearful of an economic collapse.

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The trouble came shortly after we finished the harvest. New crops were growing in the greenhouse and the outside garden crops had been harvested and canned or sold. The corn and soybean seed was stored, a portion of the oats and wheat stored and the remainder sold in Bethany. It was late fall and we were adjusting from the heavy farming pace of summer to the more leisurely pace of winter. We continued to maintain security, using the OP and the FRS and other radios.

By now anyone who could shoot a firearm was at least an acceptable shot and most were extremely proficient because, I felt, our lives depended on it. Even driving a tractor, plowing, disking, planting or picking, everyone had a rifle available, generally one of the six Standard model M1As. We used some of the leather from butchering cattle to make our own rifle scabbards and mounted them on the tractors. Overkill? Maybe!

The trouble was deceiving; it was two men from Bethany that we knew by sight, if not by name. They approached under the pretense of lining up seed for the coming year. Garden seed, not field seed. Not giving it a great deal of thought, David gave them a short tour of the greenhouse, fallow garden areas and what not. I can't say that I wouldn't have done the same. They discussed seed prices, quantities and possible delivery dates. To all intents and purposes, it seemed to be an ordinary seed buying trip.

"How did they know where we lived?"

"I didn't think to ask, Will. Surely many people in Bethany know where you live."

"Yeah, Jimbo, the Sheriff and one banker."

"Maybe they asked around."

"I'll call Jimbo and ask."

“Jimbo, got your ears on?”

“What’s up Will?”

“We had a couple of guys from Bethany out here today looking for garden seed. Did you tell anyone where we live?”

“No one. You think you have trouble?”

“I don’t know, yet. They could be what they said they were or they could have been checking the place out.”

“Who were they?”

“I recognized them but can’t put names to the faces. I can’t really say where I know them from so that’s not much help either.”

Jimbo started naming off places in Bethany where I might have met one or both of them. Nothing rang a bell. He named off 50 or so people he thought might represent trouble and I didn’t recognize the names. Finally he said that I should ask Karen, she went to school in Bethany.

“Honey, did you recognize those two guys?”

“What two guys?”

“The ones that David was showing around who said they were interested in buying garden seeds.”

“I saw them and they looked vaguely familiar. They weren’t in my high school class, or I’d have known them. One of them may have had a younger brother in my class; I’ll get out my yearbook and see if I can figure out whom.”

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“I looked. One of them was the older brother of Billy Johnstone. I don’t remember his name and don’t know much about him.”

“I’ll call your dad, maybe he’ll know.”

Jimbo, this is Will.”

“Did Karen figure it out?”

“One of them was the older brother of someone in her class, Billy Johnstone.”

“Now I know who you mean. His name is Harvey and he did about 5 years for armed robbery. I don’t know who he is running with these days, probably someone like himself. You may want to change your status and go to Threatcon Alpha.”

“We’ll consider that, thanks.”

I open my computer file on DEFCONs, LERTCONs and Threatcons. With respect to Threatcons, I found:

- (1) At regular intervals, remind all personnel and dependents to be suspicious and inquisitive about strangers, particularly those carrying suitcases or other containers. Watch for unidentified vehicles on or in the vicinity of US installations. Watch for abandoned parcels or suitcases and any unusual activity.
- (2) The duty officer or personnel with access to building plans as well as the plans for area evacuations must be available at all times. Key personnel should be able to seal off an area immediately. Key personnel required to implement security plans should be on-call and readily available.
- (3) Secure buildings, rooms, and storage areas not in regular use.
- (4) Increase security spot checks of vehicles and persons entering the installation and unclassified areas under the jurisdiction of the United States.
- (5) Limit access points for vehicles and personnel commensurate with a reasonable flow of traffic.
- (6) As a deterrent, apply measures 14, 15, 17, or 18 from Threatcon BRAVO either individually or in combination with each other.
- (7) Review all plans, orders, personnel details, and logistic requirements related to the introduction of higher Threatcons.
- (8) Review and implement security measures for high-risk personnel as appropriate.
- (9) As appropriate, consult local authorities on the threat and mutual antiterrorism measures.
- (14) Move cars and objects (e.g., crates, trash containers) at least 25 meters from buildings, particularly buildings of a sensitive or prestigious nature. Consider centralized parking.
- (15) Secure and regularly inspect all buildings, rooms, and storage areas not in regular use.
- (17) Examine mail (above the regular examination process) for letter or parcel bombs.
- (18) Check all deliveries to messes, clubs, etc. Advise dependents to check home deliveries.

After reading them over several times, it boiled down to *don’t let anyone on the farm, go armed at all times* and *maintain communications*. I called a short meeting and went over the concerns and Jimbo’s suggestion. I told them we’d be on a heightened state of alert, but not overly so. An extended alert period would have the opposite effect and make people sloppy when nothing happened. My emphasis was that people pulling guard shifts should pay close attention. David went on to describe the two men and their vehicle. They weren’t expected back until March to pick up the seed.

TOM claimed that bad things happened in threes. It was discussed to one extent or another in over half of his stories and it was 3 raised to a power, as in 3, 9, 27 and 81. We had two major bad things happen, the anthrax attack and the GTW. I discounted that minor confrontation with those two want-to-be thieves; it was over almost before it had begun. Things were returning to as normal as they could be, in the circumstances. A trip to Leon and a trip to Bethany to have a word with the County Sheriff's couldn't hurt and might just help.

Karen and I put together a gift box for each office containing an assortment of home canned and home grown food. A personal gift for each Sheriff was a bottle of the 90-proof. She and I would make the trip under the assumption that a couple might seem less threatening. Our first stop was Leon.

"Sheriff in?"

"Right through that door."

"Sheriff? Harvest is done and we thought we bring a small donation for your office. Share it with your Deputies or take it home. The bottle of 90-proof is for you. Don't know who makes it, but it's pretty good stuff."

"Lou, the guy here brought you a present."

"Sorry, I don't drink, but Lou will love it, I'm sure. You farm down on the border, don't you?"

"Right, a ways east of I-35."

"Have a good year?"

"Can't complain; may have a problem, though. A few days back, two fellas showed up from Bethany looking for seed for their garden, they said. We figured out that one of them was Harvey Johnstone. He did time for armed robbery. It might be nothing, but we have had trouble before. We have good security and all, but it would be nice to be able to call on your office if we got in over our heads."

"We don't have many Deputies, but would respond to any request for help. What do you have for communications gear?"

"Just about everything."

"Do you have any police radios?"

"No, Sheriff, we don't."

“I have one spare mobile, a Motorola XLT 2500. It would allow you to call this office or the Sheriff in Harrison County because he has compatible equipment. Can you see I-35 from your location?”

“We might be able to if we had a good telescope.”

“Do you have riflescopes?”

“Of course.”

“Can you adjust the focus to see the interstate?”

“Can’t do much more than tell you that you have traffic and the direction it’s headed.”

“That should be enough. Okay, in exchange for the radio, antenna and a power supply, you will keep this office and the Harrison County office informed of traffic on I-35 in either direction. The radio is preprogrammed with our operating frequencies. I’ll have Lou give you a list of our channels.”

“I don’t know what he expects us to do with a rifle scope.”

“What about the spotting scope, isn’t it 60 power?”

“Yes and we wouldn’t have to take a scope off a rifle. We can mount the police radio in the OP or in the radio shack. I think the OP might be better; there should be a good line of sight to Leon. We’ll have to establish some radio procedures so every vehicle sighting doesn’t turn into a full alert.”

“Are we going to go home or straight to Bethany?”

“Bethany first and then home.”

“Sheriff in?” Karen asked.

“Need something?”

“We have something for the Sheriff and news from the Decatur County Sheriff.”

They almost acted like we were beneath being allowed to see the Sheriff. However, we got in and went through the bestowing of gifts as we had in Leon. The Harrison County Sheriff didn’t call Lou and pass of the bottle. We explained about the radio and asked for a list of Harrison County channels. That resulted in a long pause while he thought it over. He eventually consented and was less eager than the Decatur County Sheriff. When we finished, Karen asked me to drop by her parents.

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 17

“I didn’t expect to see you two.”

“Daddy, we just came from the Harrison County Sheriff’s office. What’s with that guy?”

“Whatever do you mean?”

“First they didn’t want to let us in to see him, although we had a large box of supplies. We went up to Leon and the Decatur County Sheriff loaned us a police radio that he said was set up for both Decatur and Harrison County frequencies. In exchange for the radio, we’re to watch I-35 and report all traffic to both offices.”

“That sounds like a good idea.”

“Right, so the Harrison County Sheriff didn’t seem to be really interested and dragged his feet in giving us his channels.”

“Hell, I can give you the channels from my scanner.”

“That’s not the point. The point is that he doesn’t seem to be interested in free help of the type we can provide. We didn’t even bring up him responding if we were attacked because we’re out of his jurisdiction.”

“I helped raise the money that put him in office!” Jimbo exploded. “We’ll just see about his Attitude!”

“Don’t antagonize him more than he already is, Jimbo.”

“In a pig’s eye. He’ll be saying yes sir and no sir by the time I’ve finished with him. Let me know if you have any more problems with the guy.”

Later, a Deputy called and asked if he could come up and bring the ‘correct’ channels. We told him we’d keep an eye open for him and if he could manage to come by at dinner time, we’d set an extra plate. The Sheriff could have refused to give us the channel numbering system, that would have been a shame, but ethical. Instead, he provided us with an outdated list of the channels his office used. This particular model of radio had a capacity of 512 channels, each representing a different frequency. There were four frequency bands, ranging from 136 MHz to 870 MHz

The Deputy was a relatively young, single man. I asked flat out what the Sheriff’s problem was and he said that with us selling and trading our crops to feed Bethany, we were slowly depleting the existing supply of gold and silver. No one, he said, wanted anything to do with US Federal Reserve Notes. Jim Ross had been in to see the Sheriff and you could hear the yelling through the door. After Jim left, the Sheriff had seemed more

desperate than ever, but did agree to have the Deputy give us the correct radio channels.

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“Karen, I think we’d better take some of our gold and silver and deposit in our account at the bank in Bethany.”

“How much do we have?”

“A lot. You remember that I got in when gold was around \$525 and silver around \$10. I also bought \$6,000 face value in junk silver, two bags each of dimes, quarters and halves. Then, the dairy in Bethany asked for our milk and was willing to pay for it in gold and silver. Plus, there was the year that you and I agreed to put 80% of it into gold and silver and keep the remainder in cash.”

“Daddy has a lot too.”

“I know. Jack Smith also has a lot and if the three of us agreed to deposit half of what we have, Bethany would have a good supply of gold and silver. The good part is that we might get most of it back when we sell goods.”

The next morning we sorted through what we had and put half in the F-550. I had a long talk with Jack about it and he agreed to follow my lead. We three drove down to Jimbo’s and I outlined what Karen and I were doing and that Jack was doing the same thing.

“I’ll do it; might be better than having all of it stored here. Give me 30 minutes to divide it up and we can go.”

“We’d like to make a deposit.”

“How much are you depositing?”

“Twenty-eight hundred sixty ounces of silver and forty ounces of gold.”

“How much is that in money?”

“Twenty-eight hundred sixty ounces of silver and forty ounces of gold. I don’t know what gold and silver are worth these days.”

“The last I saw, gold was around \$1,600 an ounce and silver around \$35 an ounce.”

“The problem is I don’t want dollars, I want the gold and silver. Can you figure out some way to account for my deposit in those terms?”

“It would have to be a new accounting system.”

“These 4 bags of junk silver are \$1,000 face value and each contains 715 ounces of silver, but you’ll have to do the math to value the halves, quarters and dimes.”

“I have some to deposit too,” Jack added.

As Jack was finishing up, Jimbo began to set his bags of coins on the counter. He may have been more of a survivalist than I first thought. (I momentarily forgot about his trips to buy up gold and silver) The bank suddenly had a literal cartful of gold and silver and we had slips of paper showing our deposits as ounces of gold and silver. Somewhere in the middle, word had gotten to the Sheriff that we were at the bank and depositing metal. To say he looked relieved would be to understate the situation. He immediately assigned a Deputy as a bank guard.

“You look like a happy man, Sheriff.”

“Anything that was worth anything was leaving town and I had no hope of ever seeing it again.”

“We heard about your dilemma and decided to do something to help you out. I heard somewhere that money in circulation turns over about eight times. Since no one would accept the FRNs, we three decided to get some money circulating. We’ll need that if we are to have customers for our produce.”

“Figure that out all by yourself?”

“Not really, I read about it in a story titled *Percy’s Mission*.”

“I can’t say as I ever heard about that one.”

“I’m not surprised; however, the author bases many of his stories in Missouri, usually in the Ozarks.”

“Is he from around here?”

“Maybe in the past, but the last I knew was that he lived in the Reno, Nevada area. One of the other author’s I’ve read a lot is well educated, with a degree in Business and Economics and an MBA.”

“Is he from Reno too?”

“Palmdale, California. He was raised in northern Iowa. He seems to like the same guns that I do.”

“Maybe it’s a case of monkey see, monkey do.”

“You could be right, but I’ve found that I really do like what he likes.”

“Ever talk to him?”

“No, but I sent him an email and got his spreadsheet.”

“What spreadsheet?”

“He titled it *seven_ten_rule.xls*. You use it to tell when it’s safe to leave a fallout shelter. All you have to do is enter the peak radiation and press enter and it does the rest.”

“Are you explaining the facts of life to George?”

“I was talking about some of the Patriot Fiction authors I’ve read.”

“Which ones?”

“TOM and Jerry D Young.”

“What’s TOM’s last name?”

“Oh, his name isn’t TOM, that’s his handle, Tired Old Man. His name is Gary D Ott. We have a 60 power spotting scope Sheriff, so we should be able to keep a good lookout on I-35.”

“Sorry about that.”

“Don’t worry about it. Now if we do get attacked, are you going to feel constrained by a line on the map?”

“I’ve been thinking about that. As long as my Deputies are on the south side of 100th Street, we’d be in our jurisdiction.”

“Stay off to one side or you’ll likely be in our line of fire. If you do come, there’s a tarp about a quarter mile in from my property line. If we’re not there, you’re free to use what you find.”

“What will I find?”

“A Mike 240 Bravo and about 6 cans of ammo, military load, 4 ball to 1 tracer.”

“What don’t you have?”

“We don’t have any 40mm grenades.”

“Why not?”

“Mainly because I don’t care for the M16.”

“What does that have to do with 40mm grenades?”

“The M203 launcher attaches to an M16.”

“Why didn’t you get some of those Mike 320s that H&K builds for the Army?”

“I was out before they went in service.”

“So, you seem to have everything else, why didn’t you get those.”

“The Iowa National Guard didn’t have any.”

“I’ll trade you one for 2 cases of 40mm HEDP.”

“Will you trade me two for 4 cases?”

“Make it 5?”

“How many can you spare?”

“For enough 40mm rounds of various types, I can spare 3.”

◦

Don’t you just love a challenge? We hooked the trailer to the F-550 the next morning and headed to Camp Dodge after we finished milking. Gene’s knowledge of the various rounds was more prolific than mine so once we located them; I let him select which rounds we wanted. He chose HE, HEDP, CS gas, thermobaric, para illum, white smoke and practice rounds. It was a case of taking all they had of those rounds because we had more carrying capacity than they had rounds.

We returned from Camp Dodge to Bethany and let the Sheriff select what he wanted. He gave us his three spare Mike 320s that he had to launch non-lethal rounds and everyone was happy. In less than a month, we began to get orders for seed corn and our other seeds. I let Gene sell out first so he could repay a portion of what he owed us.

Eighty acres at 105 bushels per acre equals 8,400 bushels which he sold for \$6 a bushel. Not only had he paid us off, he had money in his pocket for the first time in a very long time. Oh, I paid a nominal wage, but much of his compensation from me came in the form of housing, propane, food and gasoline. He kept back just enough seed to plant 175 acres the following year.

“Are you moving back to your farm?”

“Not for a while. I can commute down there and do it like I’ve always done it, work at night and on the weekends. I have enough money to buy the fertilizer I’ll need and if I can get 100 bushels per acre next year, I’ll have over 17,000 bushels of seed to sell.”

Seed was sold in ½ bushel bags and this past year, he was selling it for \$3 a bag. Before the war, hybrid seed corn was tens of times more per half bushel. Jimbo and I held off until Gene sold his and sold for the same price. I was convinced we should ask for more but Jimbo said to let Gene get established and then we could have a gentleman’s agreement about the price. I didn’t want to go down that path.

“Why don’t we produce our own hybrid seed corn? We have the heirloom seed that Gene can provide and we can buy all of his seed to produce hybrids.”

“Growing hybrid seeds isn’t a one or two man operation. We’d need help.”

“I’m sure that some of the teenagers in Bethany and maybe Lamoni would love to have a chance to earn detasseling money.”

“Doing it the old fashioned way?”

“Do you have a better idea?”

“Not really. I guess it will be good because we’ll be putting more money in the local economy.”

“Yes, that’s why I like it, put it in the economy and it turns over a few times and ends up right back in our pockets.”

“Have you ever thought about counseling?”

“For my PTSD? No, I’m coping; it’s just harder at some times than others. PTSD creates a dissociative condition, but in my case, it isn’t chronic. It just surfaces on rare occasions.”

o

Those grenade launchers were more valuable than I first imagined because of the para illum rounds. They had a parachute attached and illuminated a wide area. The parachute lowered the round at about 7’ per second and the round burns for 40 seconds. Should someone attack during the night, we’d be ready for them.

We reported the vehicle traffic on I-35 to both offices and occasionally got a call to check for a vehicle that one of the Sheriff’s offices had spotted. No one had seen Harvey and his friend since they’d stopped by that day. I maintained Threatcon Alpha, just in case. We had basically been at that stage all along, but without identifying it. We had been

since those two fellas in the pickup. We mostly used the teenagers during the day during farming season. Since we were past that for this year, the schedules were altered to include all of the men.

Before you say that is sexist, I'll hasten to point out that our wives were our backups and would double our available fighting force, if a fight came up. One thing that did come up was the location of the Mike 240 Bravos. Gene reconsidered their location and suggested that we move them much closer to the homestead. We did so and notified George of their new location. We also increased the ammo supply from six cans to twelve. A can holds 200 rounds and the rate of fire for the Mike 240 was set to 750rpm. In heavy use, 12 cans wouldn't last for more than a few minutes.

The uninitiated might think that 1,200 rounds would only last 1.6 minutes. However the Field Manual says:

Sustained Fire: 100 rounds per minute fired in 6- to 9-round bursts and 4 to 5 seconds between bursts (barrel change every 10 minutes).

Rapid Fire: 200 rounds per minute fired in 10- to 13-round bursts and 2 to 3 seconds between bursts (barrel change every 2 minutes).

Which explains why one spare barrel wasn't enough; it might be if you were using sustained fire, but for continuing rapid fire, three spares might not be enough. The saving grace was the fact that all ammo cans contained only 200 rounds. We linked the two belts in each can for convenience, but in a firefight, we'd still have to put in new belts and change barrels.

Everyone was trained to operate the Mike 240 Bravo and the Mike 320, using practice rounds in the case of the grenade launcher. In the event of an attack, whoever was in the OP would bailout of the OP and move to a fighting position, made up of sandbags, on the roof of the barn. With the machineguns closer in, they could be manned quicker, but not more safely. I got a man down from Lamoni to cut a trench from near the house to the two machinegun positions. We couldn't spread around all of our money in Missouri, Iowa needed help too.

The Amish community near Lamoni was doing a good job of providing for their neighbors and I suppose that may be why Uncle John went to Osceola to sell food. This group wasn't the same as the group that was portrayed in the movie *Witness*. Those folks were the Amish that originated in Switzerland. Our Amish group had originated in Germany. The Pennsylvania Amish were much stricter in following their traditions. During the early 20th century, the Amish in Iowa began to abandon some, but not all, of their traditions.

We had only regressed 50 years, so far, from the second decade of the 21st century to the mid-20th century. Over a period of time, the hand detasseling went from hand detas-

seling to a combination of mechanical and hand detasseling to improved methods, eliminating the summer jobs for many teenagers.

o

It was early October and we continued to report traffic on I-35 to both Sheriff's offices. Traffic, for the most part, was rare. We almost never saw any trucks of any description, except for pickups. So, it came as quite a shock when one the boys reported a semi tractor-trailer rig southbound for Bethany. The office replied that they'd sent a tractor-trailer to Chariton and they were expecting it back. They'd gone the back way to Chariton, through Albany. The roads were in a state of disrepair and they couldn't bring the loaded truck back on the poorly maintained highways they'd used to get to Chariton.

We were ready to settle in for the winter, manure had been spread, all of the plowing was done and livestock sold. We sent 3 steers and 6 hogs to the butcher to restock the freezers. He had frozen turkeys and we bought a dozen of the 22-pound size. We also butchered the chickens and added them to the freezer, except for the brood hens and layers. He had one other item that we seldom saw, fish filets. Most of the fishing was done by individuals and they ate what they caught. Anyway, we bought 4 boxes of the frozen fillets. We were well stocked on food although we'd sold a lot of it in Bethany and a small portion in Lamon.

"We have traffic on 100th Street."

"Which direction is it coming from?"

"The west and they aren't moving fast. It appears that they're looking for something."

"Notify both Sheriff's that we're on alert due to the traffic. Raise the Threatcon to Delta, the DEFCON to 2 and we'll get everyone into position."

The car continued down the road, albeit slowly. There were 4 men inside but we didn't see any firearms. It continued past our driveway and passed beyond our farm. We parleyed after they were gone and concluded we should leave the Threatcon at Delta and lower the DEFCON to 4.

Threatcon Delta applies in the immediate area where a terrorist attack has occurred or when intelligence has been received that terrorist action against a specific location or person is likely. Normally, this Threatcon is declared as a localized condition. Our intelligence was Humint, ergo, direct observation. Had the vehicle traversed the area at a more normal speed, we may not have considered it to be a threat.

"We need to put the least well qualified on rifles on the machineguns."

"Any ideas who, Gene?"

"I'd say Rose on one and David on the other. If it were my decision, I'd talk to Jimbo and see if they could come up here and stay for a brief period of time."

"How brief of a period of time?"

"Say 30 days."

"I don't know that they would want to be away from their farm for that long. Plus they have all the livestock to care for."

"It was just a thought, Will. Maybe since we've added the 40mm grenades, we'll be okay. Everyone's up to speed on their use and we have the para illum rounds if we get a night attack."

o

"Let me see those pictures again. What's this?"

"We think it's what it appeared to be, a mound of dirt."

"And this?"

"It's obviously a watchtower."

"And this?"

"That's the second mound of dirt."

"Did anyone put boots on the ground and check?"

"No because you said not to draw undue attention to ourselves."

"But, you're sure the farm is occupied?"

"They had someone in that watchtower."

"Is that the only person you saw?"

"Yes, but it doesn't mean there weren't more. Do you see the picture with the mobile homes? We figured one family per home. We might be going up against 5 men."

"Let's assume there are 5 men and maybe a couple of teenagers."

"What about wives and daughters?"

“Maybe one or two of them might participate, carrying ammo and such. We don’t know how many of the guys are married, but for safety’s sake, we’ll assume the men have some military background.”

“When do you want to do this?”

“Around oh dark thirty three days hence and we attack, I want those mounds checked out.”

Around 3am on the third day, they came. The decision was made to bring $\frac{2}{3}$ of the crew, some 39 men. The 20 women would stay at their primary location, a farm 3 miles south of Lamoni on the highway. They used 8 cars to haul everyone and they parked at the west fence line of our property and set out on foot.

Like I said, our night vision was only 2nd generation, but it worked. Gene was in the OP and he spotted them soon after they disembarked and started walking. The generation 2 night vision allowed detection around 300 meters and identification around 250 meters. We went to DEFCON 1 in a heartbeat while Gene notified both Sheriff’s offices. Both offices said they would respond as soon as possible.

By the time they got to the first mound of dirt, Rose had pulled the machinegun back a ways in the ditch. All they found was an abandoned fighting position. Those of us with suppressors started to pick them off, one by one. This caused them to spread out and go to ground. When I couldn’t find a clear shot, I switched from the Super Match to my Tac-50 and took out the first and last vehicle using Mk211. Then, I worked my way to the front and disabled each vehicle in turn. When I started to get return fire, I moved back to my Super Match with its vastly improved flashhider and resumed individual targets.

Meanwhile, Rose had returned the Mike 240 Bravo back to the fighting position and was laying down a withering pattern of fire. David was far enough from the people that he could barely make them out in the light the para illum flare provided, hence was maintaining a fair volume of fire. We were mostly launching flares, not grenades.

Some twenty minutes into the ongoing firefight, the Harrison County Sheriff and a posse, if that was what it was, approached the attackers from the south, placing them in a crossfire. Shortly after, the Decatur County Sheriff and some people from Leon showed up. With the additional fire, the fire from the attackers petered out and stopped.

Of course, not all of the attackers were dead, although it may have run as high as 50/50. The firearms were collected and questioning began. It generally went something like this.

“I’m hurt, I need a doctor.”

“Answer my questions and we’ll get you one. Otherwise, you might just not make it.”

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 18

“What do you want to know?”

“Is this all of you?”

“Except for the women, yes.”

“Where might they be?”

“A farm 3 miles south of Lamoni, on the highway.”

“How many?”

“I’ve said all I’m going to say until I get help.”

BANG.

You will have to admit that the guy was out of his misery. Some of the wounded expired before they could be questioned.

We started to check our people, seeing if there were any fatalities or injured. Barney had a crease on his left shoulder and a through and through in his left upper arm that missed the humerus. Bill has a hole in his coat where a round barely missed him. Gene took a round down the length of his back, not deep, but ugly. Jill and David, Karen and I, Jack and Sally plus Brad and Rose were uninjured. Everyone else had been in the house or more specifically, the shelter.

The Sheriff (Decatur) found a manila envelope full of digital photos of the farm. They had things circled and notes. They knew the number of homes, the location of the watchtower and both of the *mounds* were circled with a note, *check out*. They had been armed with an assortment of firearms, ranging from M4s and M16s to a PTR copy of the HK 91. The Sheriffs’ divided up the automatic weapons and allowed us to choose from the remaining weapons. I took a modified M14 and Karen took the PTR. Everyone was allowed to choose one firearm and when we were done, the Sheriffs’ divided up the remainder and the ammo.

Our injured were loaded in an ambulance and transported to the Harrison County Community Hospital. We decided to leave the destroyed vehicles sit until daylight and then pull them off the road. We searched the bodies and loaded them aboard my pickup and trailer. Everything we found went into a cardboard box for later distribution.

Eventually, word got out about the battle and it was called the *Battle of 100th Street*. Emptying the pockets of the 39 attackers was worth the effort, although gruesome. Every one of them had at least one gold Eagle or more and some fractional Eagles plus and assortment of junk silver. Not every one of them had silver Eagles, however. The gold

and silver was evenly divided among those who had participated in the battle. It was probably the most money Brad or Bill had ever had at one time.

The participants were: Karen and me, Jack and Sally, Gene and Rose, Jill and David, Barney and Jane, Bill and Brad.

I wished the word hadn't gotten out for at least two reasons: it suggested that we had something worth taking and you'd better bring your big guns because we were well prepared. It took Barney and Gene about two months to fully heal. In the meantime, Jack and I made a trip to Johnston to get bigger guns, in this case two Mike 2 Hotel Bravo machineguns and the ammo they used in their M1A1 tanks, 4 rounds of AP and 1 round of APIT. We didn't have to worry about headspace or timing; you did that when you replaced a barrel.

"So you notched it up one more step. What's next, an M1A1 Abrams tank?"

"Only if you think we should have one David. I don't for several reasons, not the least of which they have a four person crew, the driver, loader, gunner and commander."

"I sure wasn't suggesting it. This place is more like an armed camp than anything I've ever seen."

"That's right David, it is and you should glad it is. Without the preparations we'd made in the defense area, we could have been taken over. We've had two attempts to get what we have and the second was an escalation of the first. We've made adjustments, but always after the fact, not before. The Mike 2 Hotel Bravo will be the last we add to the armory. It has an effective range well past our property line and nobody will even get close. If you don't like it, feel free to leave at any time, I've had about all I can stand from you."

That ended the conversation quickly. There was unexpected steel in my voice that he must have noticed. Despite having eaten the Maid Rite meat and tenderloins sparingly, they were all gone and I would have considered giving my left arm up to the elbow for more. I decided to take that to Jack.

"Maid Rite Corporation is in Des Moines, right?"

"Yes they are, on 86th Street."

"Do you have any idea where they produce their products?"

"I don't have a clue, why?"

"Because Jack, I'd like to get more. I'd get a truckload of their products if I could find it. We like the Maid Rite sandwiches and the pork tenderloins. However, their onion rings

are good too. We can get a freezer trailer and pull it with a semi-tractor, provided we knew where to look.”

“We could just go to their company headquarters and look around to find out where the plant or plants are. I don’t know that we would find any product so long after the war, but all you’d be out is the fuel and time.”

We went to Bethany and located a reefer trailer that could be cooled to freezing or below. It had a separate tank for the non-road diesel so we had to stop back at the farm to fill that tank. That accomplished, we set off looking for the needle in the haystack, a truckload of Maid Rite products. That might take a very large magnifying glass.

Except that the corporate headquarters offices were part of the processing plant. The processing plant had a natural gas fueled standby generation system in case they ever lost power, probably because of the goods they had stored in large, minus 60° freezers. At those temperatures, they didn’t have to worry about freezer burn. Freezer burn is caused by water molecules migrating to the surface of the frozen product and evaporating. The colder it is, the smaller the migration, and for vacuum packed products held in very cold climates the product doesn’t burn for a very long time. We would need cryogenic storage to continue to prevent the product we found to not burn, provided we didn’t eat it up first. We didn’t have cryogenic storage available, or enough freezers to hold what we had.

However, the reefer could be set to very low temperatures, well below 0° F. Essentially, all we had to do was provide electricity and we had electricity to spare. All, I might point out, because we hadn’t scrimped when we’d put in our systems. Which brings up the point of scrimping; if you have a choice, don’t. Put in enough backup power, a large enough shelter and either buy or borrow an appropriate arsenal. You still have to eat and Walton Food, Emergency Essentials and online preparedness firms can supply you until things begin to get tight. An example: in late 2008, you couldn’t get any Mountain House products from the usual sources. Food was short, prices were high and all those sheeple finally decided they’d better prep too.

In the aftermath of the two attacks, the people who were attacking the farm were most likely sheeple, not preppers. Preppers would have what they needed and know to ask rather than try to take. They might not ask us, but they might ask one of the Sheriff’s if he knew where they could buy or trade for food. Alternatively, they could pay attention when we made deliveries to the various communities and ask us then.

◦

Maybe a month after our trip to Des Moines, the ground shook. We were anxious and began discussing what it might be.

“The New Madrid Fault?”

“I don’t know that’s about 350 miles.”

“Yellowstone?”

“It’s further.”

“NEO slammed into the planet?”

“It could be any one of the three. It could even be Long Valley Caldera or San Andreas out in California. We’ll have to monitor the ham radio until someone says something so we can pin it down. Hang on, here we go again.”

It soon became apparent due to repeated shaking that it probably wasn’t a NEO unless the rock had broken up. A day later, we were convinced it wasn’t a NEO when the shaking continued. Hams in southern Missouri said it wasn’t the New Madrid Fault System. A ham from Bishop, California said that things were fine out there, eliminating the San Andreas Fault and Long Valley Caldera. Yellowstone was looking more likely every day. That is until we picked up a ham from Wyoming who claimed it wasn’t Yellowstone.

“So you have no idea what it could be?”

“Sorry, Jack, all the things that we discussed earlier isn’t the source of the shaking. Whatever it is, I think it’s big. I suppose it could be anyone of the dozen or so calderas in the US waking up. I have a list of them:”

Battle Ground Lake State Park (Washington)
Mount Aniakchak (Alaska)
Crater Lake (Oregon)
Mount Katmai (Alaska)
La Garita (Colorado)
Long Valley (California)
Island Park (Idaho)
Newbury Volcano (Oregon)
Mount Okmok (Alaska)
Valles Caldera (New Mexico)
Yellowstone Caldera (Wyoming)

“There are as many in Canada as there are in the US.”

“But it isn’t Yellowstone? Are you sure about that?”

“The guy I talked to said that they felt significant shaking but someone checked and Yellowstone was fine.”

“What else is in that area?”

“La Garita and Valles.”

“Do you know much about them?”

“Only what I read on Wiki. Valles had the most recent eruption, but La Garita was probably one of the largest explosions in the history of the world. It was given a VEI of 9.2 and was about one fiftieth of the rock that killed off the dinosaurs. It created what they call the Fish Canyon Tuff and was about double the volume of the largest Yellowstone eruption.”

“Sounds like a Supervolcano.”

“It is, but it’s supposed to be extinct.”

“Maybe it doesn’t know it’s supposed to be extinct.”

o

If you recall what the scientists at YVO say about predicting an eruption, there would be earthquake swarms preceding the eruption as the magma works its way to the surface. Many of the calderas have resurgent domes where magma has created a new mound, for want of a better term, in the caldera or volcano. Long Valley has a dome as does Mt. St. Helens. All we can do was hope for the best, absent more information.

In the aftermath of the war, there had been pockets of civilization like Bethany and Lamon. Big cities, like Des Moines, lost a majority of their populations because it was hard to grow a garden on concrete. Even larger cities had been targets. The further east a person went, the greater the death toll to fallout, due to the westerly winds.

“I’ve been thinking about this rumbling, Jack. It could be La Garita waking up. The problem with that is we’d be right in the path of any major ash fall. I don’t believe a pyroclastic flow would get past Nebraska, however.”

“Any idea how far it is?”

“Not really, maybe 700 miles line of sight.”

“What are the chances that it could get this far?”

“I would guess that might depend on the volume of the eruption. I’m sure that we would get ash, but hot gasses? Hopefully we’ll have enough warning to get in the shelter if needed.”

“Do you need to give Jim and Susan a heads up?”

“I’ll call him on the radio and see if he wants to start moving his herds up here.”

“Who were you talking to on the radio?”

“Your father. I was giving him an advance warning that we could have a Supervolcano.”

“Yellowstone?”

“No, perhaps La Garita.”

“Where is that?”

“Western Colorado. It produced the largest volcanic eruption in history.”

“Do you really believe it could explode?”

“It has to be a possibility.”

“Why haven’t I ever heard of La Garita?”

“It’s supposed to be extinct. In practice, it is often impossible to distinguish between a dormant and an extinct volcano and several volcanoes thought to be extinct have subsequently re-erupted. Volcanoes can be dormant for hundreds or thousands of years and, due to the lack of eruptions, are usually eroded and worn down. The eruptions from a dormant volcano are usually very violent because the plug inside the volcano stops the lava from coming out of the vent for a very long time, thus building pressure. The volcano will then erupt again and be classified as an active volcano.”

The rumbling continued and at times seemed to be heavier than others. First Jimbo moved everything they had to our place. Next, it was time to prepare the fields for planting and we disked and dragged all fields. It wasn’t quite warm enough to plant so we held back. WHO Radio confirmed that the extinct La Garita caldera seemed to be making a comeback. It had *spat* lava a few times but hadn’t erupted. Kate Hutton of the USGS in Pasadena, now in an undisclosed location, suggested that if the La Garita did erupt, it could range from a minor eruption to something unimaginable. Thanks, Kate, tell us something we didn’t know.

“Are we going to plant or not?”

“You can if you want Jimbo; I think the only thing I’ll plant is a garden. We have enough feed put up for both herds for a year or more. If you want to haul some hay up here, it should last longer.”

“How about we bring half of what we have in the barn?”

“Do you want Jack, Gene and Barney to help?”

“Sure, if we can come up with enough flatbeds.”

We ended up hauling three flatbeds of hay and covering it with tarps without taking it off the trailers. If nothing came of the rumbling, they could haul it back. The barn was crowded although not overcrowded. We saddled up some horses and did a turn around the farm, checking fences and enjoying the spring weather. For the fun of it, I was carrying my Winchester and wearing a Vaquero.

Preparations wise, we'd done some salvaging and had an ample stock of those things we couldn't produce or grow; just the usual suspects, toilet paper, hygiene, spices, coffee, oil and filters. If we had a volcanic eruption, we were ready. It didn't happen. The ground shaking tapered off until there weren't any noticeable tremors. We stayed together until planting season neared and then Jimbo's family moved home. Gene, Rose and their kids moved to their farm, leaving Jack and Sally, Barney and Jane, David and Jill.

The ladies cleaned up the empty mobile home, for the next time. Gene was producing the soybean and corn seed for the people in the area and making a good living doing it. On our farm, we returned to growing corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and alfalfa. We always seemed to have a bit of ethanol left over that the fuel tank wouldn't hold and we saved it for other uses. Unfortunately the generator used anywhere from 1.2gph to 4.7gph. We were producing only 3,800 gallons of biodiesel, leaving us short from $10,519 - 3,800 = 6,719$ to as much as $41,200 - 3,800 = 34,700$ gallons. That was the generator only and didn't count the semi tractors or my Ford F-550.

So far, we'd recovered fuel from truck stops and refreshed it with PRI-D to make up the shortfall. We had 2 drums of PRI-D, one of PRI-G and an anti-gelling compound to begin with. Fifty-five gallons of PRI-D will only treat 110,000 gallons of diesel and sooner or later we were going to have a problem, possibly as soon as 3 years.

PRI is Power Research Inc. and they're located in the ruins of Houston, Texas. We needed a bunch if we were going to continue to recover stale diesel fuel. It was only around 840 miles to Houston and the radiation should have decayed by now. Jack, Barney and I could take a 40' box trailer and load it up with what we needed. If there was someone there who wanted paid for the product, I had gold; if not, we'd use their forklift and load up the trailer. We'd do that as soon as the crops were in and I'd either get Jim or Gene to handle our chores while we were gone.

◦

“I'm trying to get my stuff around for the trip, Will, do you have any recommendations?”

“I was thinking a box of hand grenades, the Mike 320 and some HEDP rounds. We'll probably take one Tac-50, our shotguns, handguns, the Super Match rifles and ammo. We can take some of those Mountain House meals and a camp stove so we can heat

the water. Maybe a chemical toilet and 6 5-gallon cans of water plus a pocket filter. We'll take the CD V-700 and the CD V-715 and our dosimeters, just in case."

"Where are we going to sleep?"

"Do you think Barney and you would be up to driving straight through and getting a motel or something on our way back?"

"Maybe, what about fuel?"

"We'll take four drums with us. We should be able to get there and half way back before we need to stop and refuel. This could be risky although it's sort of a must do trip."

Our only problem getting to Houston was avoiding stalled cars on the way down. Luckily, we were able to push them to the side and continue. We had to bypass Kansas City because it had been a target. Further south, we had to do the same at Topeka and then Emporia. Next came Wichita and Oklahoma City. We went west to avoid Dallas for two reasons, it had been a target and Jack saw a road block in time for us to avoid it.

I don't know how we managed, but we finally made it to Power Research, interacting with not another human being. All of their products were in gallon jugs or smaller so we began loading pallets of the 6-gallon cases of PRI-D and PRI-G, mostly the diesel additive. We were probably overloaded but there weren't any weighing stations open to worry about. All that meant was that we needed to drive carefully and slower than normal.

Our detour into Huston put us through the city of Pasadena and we went the same way on our return trip. We looked on the way in and the way out for Gilley's, but it was no more. We did, however, pass by more than one bar and liquor store. From the liquor stores, we salvaged a bit of the best, but nothing that sold for less than \$50 a bottle. We added to the weight of the trailer by picking up full kegs of beer from the refrigerated storage in several bars. It wasn't so much that it had been kept cold as I was that it hadn't been allowed to get hot.

Karen and I had a 2-keg refrigerated dispenser but no product to put in it. Generally, a keg of beer lasted long enough to become gassy, putting out a whole lot of foam. We'd finished off what we had during the first 18 months. If it wasn't good enough to drink, I was betting that someone in Bethany or Lamoni might like to acquire it.

Rather than restoring diesel fuel that was available at the numerous truck stops along the way, we elected to use the fuel we brought with us. We kept a list of places that seemed to have fuel, just in case. One of the largest sources close to home was the I-80 truck stop in Iowa, just west of Davenport. It was one of, if not the, largest truck stop in the nation. Conservatively, I guessed that it held as much as one million gallons of diesel fuel plus a few thousand gallons of gas.

When we returned, without a scratch I'll point out, we were happy to be home. Having not seen any real destruction because Des Moines wasn't a target, we were chagrined by the level of destruction in the big cities like Kansas City, Dallas and Houston. I couldn't see how anyone had managed to live through those detonations. KC had taken one and it appeared that Dallas and Houston had taken at least two, each. Given the quantity of PRI products we'd recovered, Jack and Barney agreed to look for and bring back tanker loads of diesel fuel that had been restored, if possible.

David and I stayed home tending to the crops and livestock while they located and brought back 6 tandem trailers all treated with PRI-D and anti-gel. Now we had enough fuel on hand for a few years. The generator finally gave up the ghost and it took a mechanic from Bethany more than a week to rebuild it. We used the standby 12kw China diesel in the interim, mostly because it was already wired in.

There is no rest for the weary, if you haven't heard. We needed more canning jars and lids, something on the order of a truckload. We knew that Jarden made the Ball and Kerr jars and lids, but didn't know where they made them or where their warehouse was. In the past, we'd ordered canning supplies from a place in Utah, Canning Pantry. Since we'd pretty much cleaned out any place in the area of canning products, it was decided to make a trip to Utah and have the goods we needed before the ladies ran out. They were located in Hyrum, UT which was northeast of Salt Lake City and almost to Logan. It was further, too, over 1,100 miles. However since empty jars weighed less than full jars, we should be able to recover all they had available. I was hoping for a full truckload of jars, lids and other canning products. We got to the Utah state line without major difficulty. There was a roadblock we couldn't avoid.

"Where are you headed?"

"Hyrum?"

"Looking for meat? Canning supplies? What?"

"Canning supplies."

"They take gold and silver. If you don't have that, turn around and return to where you came from."

"We have gold and silver and hopefully it will be enough."

"Current exchange rate is \$1,500 an ounce on gold; \$30 an ounce on silver and the prices for what they have hasn't changed. Can you handle that?"

"I believe so. It would depend on how much they have in stock."

"We'll be providing an escort, so don't try anything funny. It looks to me like you're prepared to defend yourselves."

“Do you get many semis?”

“Once in a great while we’ll get one, but most them are looking to salvage and we just turn them around. You do salvaging?”

“We do, but only when the property is clearly abandoned.”

“Don’t suppose that you’d have anything to trade, would you?”

“What do you need?”

“Fuel treatments; all of the gas and diesel have gone bad.”

“Would 18 gallons of PRI-D and 6 gallons of PRI-G help?”

“Would it ever. It would probably get you 200 cases of jars. Do you have some?”

“In the trailer.”

“Can you get more?”

“We can, but probably not enough for the whole state of Utah.”

“We’ll give \$500 a case for all you can get.”

“You might want to make a trip to Iowa with a truckload of canning jars and lids. We’re easy to find, take I-35 south of Des Moines and stop at the state line, 100th street. Park there and someone will come to get you. How about we get this show on the road, it’s been a long trip.”

We were escorted to Hyrum and to Canning Pantry’s warehouse. We unloaded the 4 cases of PRI products we’d thrown on the trailer at the last minute, just in case. They loaded the trailer with jars, lids, canning spices, and All American canners. We got out of the place with most of our gold intact; most, but not all. They suggested that they could put together one more truckload and would if we paid for it with PRI products and enough fuel to top off their tanks. We told them the areas to avoid if they made the trip.

“How long have you been driving semis, Will?”

“Am I doing something wrong?”

“Not really, I was just curious.”

Threatcon Delta – Chapter 19

“Counting the trip to Houston, this is my second trip.”

“A full truckload? Salvage?”

“No, Karen, we had to pay for it. They had more and will bring us more in exchange for PRI products.”

“Do you have enough?”

“A cases of jars cost us \$10 and the PRI stuff was worth \$500 per case. It won't dent our supply and you'll have a lifetime supply of jars and lids.”

“The lids don't store well, they go bad.”

“Would sealing them in a vacuum bag help?”

“We won't know until we try.”

“Let's give it a shot and put a dozen boxes per bag.”

We didn't feel any more rumbling throughout the summer months. We got the delivery from Utah and stored it for future use. The garden had been expanded and we hired some teens from Bethany, paying them in food. Most of the time, we had at least 4, if not 6, canners running at one time. They were staggered, time wise, so they'd be emptying and reloading it while the others cooked. It was nearly a 24 hour a day operation. The teens picked and prepared while Karen, Jill, Sally and Jane did the actual canning. One of the teens also baby sat.

We got through the harvest and had produced the biodiesel and then topped of the diesel tank. We produced enough ethanol to refill the tanks and used the extra few gallons the way we usually did. Some of the stuff had been left to age and we were still working on the few bottles Dad had produced. There was very little drinking despite the fact we were practically floating in the stuff. Bullets and booze don't mix and you never knew when the next group might show up and want their share. Just because it had been a while didn't mean it wouldn't happen again. There was talk of outlaws in both Lamoni and Bethany.

On what would have been Columbus Day, October 12th, the ground resumed shaking with a vengeance. It was enough to knock things off shelves although no cabinets tipped over because they were secured. Three hours after the shaking began, Gene and Rose were there followed within minutes by Jimbo and his family. We moved all of the livestock back into the barn or kept them in the near pasture. We settled in to wait for whatever followed.

Not that it's pertinent to the immediate situation, but Gene mentioned that his seed corn business had slacked off from the people using the heirloom seed and all he was selling now was hybrids. The difference in yield between the hybrids ~165 and the heirloom ~100 meant he was selling all of the hybrids he could produce.

On October 15th, the ground all but exploded and no one was left standing. It even knocked some of us out of our chairs.

"I thought we were passed this."

"It did seem like we were. I ran the ham bands the past three days and the only hams I haven't been able to contact are those in Colorado and Wyoming."

"La Garita?"

"Could be. If it is and the eruption is as large as the last one, we're looking at 5,000km³ of ash extending all the way to the east coast and some Caribbean islands."

"How about around here?"

"It could be from 5cm to 5meters, but probably somewhere in between."

"Five meters is, what 15 feet?"

"About sixteen and one half."

"So, you suggesting up to 8' of ash?"

"Of course, the further away you are from it, the less deep it would be. If I recall correctly, La Garita and the Fish Canyon Tuff weren't that large when compared to the Huckleberry Ridge eruption. Most of it went to the SSE and it was a lot of lava."

"Yellowstone?"

"You'd better hope not. If it exploded and put out as much ash as La Garita, we really would have up to 5 meters of ash."

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Five thousand km³ is equal to 1,199.56mi³. One would assume that the conversion factor is 4.1682, give or take. I finally found another table on my computer and it said, "cubic kilometers x 0.2399 = cubic miles; cubic miles x 4.168 = cubic kilometers." The point was that Huckleberry Ridge put out 585mi³ or 2,450km³. We were looking at possibly double that volume if it was La Garita and the volume equal the previous major eruption. Except that: 1) it wasn't La Garita, but Yellowstone; and, 2) Yellowstone put out

±5,400km³ of ash, this time when it erupted on October 19th although we didn't know the volume at the time. We had about ½ meter of ash by the time it tapered off.

“Are we going to be able to plow that in?”

“We might if we take several passes. We're going to need to start from scratch on everything Jimbo, especially the permanent pasture and my alfalfa field.”

“What are you going to use for pasture?”

“Maybe Bermuda grass if I can find seed.”

We had spent two weeks in the shelter, leaving only long enough to care for the livestock and gather eggs. We fed most of the milk to the hogs; we were getting 400 gallons twice a day.

A person wouldn't have dared run a vehicle with the amount of ash in the air. As it was, the air filters for the generators required daily cleaning. We shut down all the generators after two days of that. We also weren't maintaining a watch for trouble, it seemed beyond likely. With little else to do besides the livestock and cleaning air filters, we sat down and cleaned all of the firearms taking care to remove any grime previously missed and properly lubricate them. We also unloaded our magazines and reloaded the ammo into the spare set we had for each weapon, to rest the springs.

When we were in Iraq most of us had at least 1½ to 2 sets of magazines and we rotated them. I guess I should have swung by Bull Shoals Lake and looked up Derek. I wonder if Derek ever got his father's firearms. His Dad had 4 that he mentioned: an M1A Loaded, Mossberg 590A1 (ghost ring sights, no speed feed stock), Taurus PT1911B and a Sauer & Sohn model 38H in 7.65 Browning (.32acp). The German pistol had a very low serial number (under 300,000) and was probably in the first lot manufactured.

Until the eruption stopped, the earthquakes continued. My first thought was, “That makes three, we can quit now.” Plowing the ash in was more difficult than it appeared. It was so abrasive, it looked like it would wear out the plow before we finished. The tractor pushing through the ash blew it up in the air and we had to stop after every furrow to clean the air cleaner. The first three passes didn't seem to accomplish much because only a small amount of soil was showing. We made one pass with the disk and resumed plowing. Three more passes with the plow and one more pass with the disk and we had enough soil to plant in.

We wouldn't be planting this year; the volcanic winter beat the nuclear winter hands down. Any gardening would be confined to the greenhouse. When we'd finished preparing our fields and Jimbo finished his, we both lent Gene a hand. There were 3 of us that could drive a tractor, David didn't count, and Jimbo had himself and Jim. Gene only had himself and it seemed like the neighborly thing to do.

As I'd hoped, that was the last of it. Among the three events, untold millions in our country and untold billions around the world died. Not enough to reduce the gene pool as happened when Mt. Toba erupted, but closer than anyone would have imagined. There weren't many banditos left and those that showed up were quickly dealt with, justice being rendered by Samuel Colt, Oliver Winchester, John Browning or one of his heirs.

We continued to carry at least a handgun for the next ten years due to the shortage of food. We could grow enough for our group and Jimbo erected a greenhouse in partnership with Gene. Both Bethany and Lamoni were forced to follow our example and erect greenhouses. We supplied some seed, but after that they were on their own.

Finally the ash and sulfuric acid was out of the atmosphere and we had the warmth and sunlight to grow food and crops outside. The only commerce we engaged in up to that point was the sale of milk, cheese, eggs and meat. Our four were old enough now to teach them the proper use of firearms. We started with a 10/22 and moved them to their Mini-14s, starting with Billy, Jim and Karen. The next year, we moved them to the 9mm Beretta pistols and Mini-14 and started Jill on the 10/22. They were good students and took their training seriously. Finally Jill moved to the Beretta and the triplets asked to shoot the M1As. Karen and I had enough of everything and soon everyone was shooting every firearm in our arsenal. The kids more or less taught themselves to hunt because I didn't have time to share what little experience I had.

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A slow recovery had begun from those locations like Bethany and Lamoni, even Osceola where people managed to survive the 3 disasters. A few firms in Des Moines resumed production, including Maid Rite. Food production was a major industry and we did what we could to supply meat. We sold beef and hogs to the company and took a portion of what we sold back in finished products and the remainder in gold.

A new census was being taken and the population of the United States was between 20 and 25 million. The figures were the initial numbers before the final count was known. Survivors in the Midwest who'd managed to make it through the Anthrax and the war had succumbed to Yellowstone. The largest group of survivors was in the eastern Midwest, places like Ohio and Indiana.

We cleaned up and stored the things like the Mike 240 Bravo and Mike 2 Hotel Bravo, just in case. A bunker was built to separately house the explosives and ammunition. We had a lot of ammunition and more of it was burned up on the target range than ever in any fight.

David and Jill separated and then divorced. Eventually, she found another man whose attitudes were more in keeping with those of us on the farm. He was raised on a farm and it worked out well. Jack and Barney aged gracefully, as did Jimbo. Gene bought more land and expanded his seed business.

We could quit worrying about another anthrax attack, the terrorists were dead. There wouldn't be another WW III because all of the nuclear weapons had been used up. Yellowstone wouldn't be due to blow again for 600,000 years. I bought 3 additional sections of ground in the area so that each of our children could have their own farm when the time came.

Eventually, power was restored and limited phone service restored, but you had to call the operator and tell her who you wanted to talk to; she'd either connect you to them or long distance. It was like the late forties or early fifties, or so I'm told.

We made many more trips around the country, mainly looking for parts to repair the equipment. The generators needed to be rebuilt, the tractor engine rebuilt, bald tires replaced. I made it to Flippin, Arkansas during one of those trips and Derek wasn't there. Another trip found him in Palmdale, California living in his father's house. We lay over a couple of nights and I left him 4 full ammo cans of the South African ammo. The only changes they'd made over the years were to extend the concrete block wall all the way around the house and install gates. Using one at a time, he'd managed to stretch use of one of the four computers in the house and still had all of his father's collection of files. He burned me a DVD and gave me the spare CD he had from KI4U. I don't believe I'll need that one.

I've got to go now, Karen has prepared breaded pork tenderloins with pickles and mustard and I'm hungry.

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